

Minister of the Gospel at Perth
LETTER

4735.aaa.30.
FROM A

Member of the ASSOCIATE
PRESBYTERY

TO A

Minister in the Presbytery
of *D-----ne.*

WHEREIN

The Question, concerning SECESSION
from the *present Judicatories*, is stated
and examined.

WITH A

POSTSCRIPT,

CONTAINING

Some REMARKS on the Reverend
Mr. *CURRIE*'s Essay on SEPARATION.

EDINBURGH,

Printed by THO. LUMSDEN and JO. ROBERTSON,
and sold at their Printing-house in the *Fish-market*.
M.DCC.XXXVIII.

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from the original
and corrected

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CONTAINING
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A LETTER from a Member of the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY to a Minister in the Presbytery of D——ne.

R. D. B.



Should have given a Return to yours of the 23d *January* last sooner; but I was hindered, partly thro' bodily Indisposition, and partly thro' a Throng of other Work upon my Hands. You grant, that what I wrote you concerning the Conduct of the present Judicatories since the Year 1734 is "a sad Truth, to wit, That Reformation-work hath not been at Heart, at least, with the most Part:" And likewise you own, That Indignities have been done in former Years to the exalted Redeemer, both in his Person and Offices, by the Assembly's Proceedings with Mr. *Simson*, and of late with Mr. *Campbell*:" As also, "That the Head of the Church has been dishonoured by the late Act of Parliament, and by Ministers reading it as appointed; and that Judicatories have not duly testified against it." I may add, They have not in the least testified in their judicative Capacity against the Injury done thereby to the Redeemer's Crown and Kingdom. But yet, so far as you have hitherto understood the only Rule to direct and guide in difficult Cases, you write, That, when you consider some particular Scripture-instances that you mention, you are natively led to think, that Communion may be held with Churches very corrupt, and especially with such as have given no Testimony at all against gross Hereticks and the Heresies taught by them; and consequently, as your Missive imports, you do not see it to be your Duty, from the Lord's Word, to bear Testimony against the Sins, Errors and Backslidings of the present Times, in the Way of Secession from the Judicatories of this National Church.

D. B. I am heartily sorry that we should have different Sentiments about the Manner of testifying for the injured Truths of Christ in this *Day of Perplexity and treading down in our Valley of Vision*. I own, that, after the Meeting

ting of the Assembly 1734, I was in much Perplexity about our continuing in a State of Seceſſion; it occaſioned many Thoughts of Heart unto me, to underſtand what was Duty in the preſent Caſe: But as I had no Heſitation about my Duty when I did, together with my other three Brethren, declare a Seceſſion from the preſent Judicatories of this Church, in our Proteſtation entred before the Commiſſion of the General Aſſembly November 1733; ſo, when I have obſerved the Conduct of the ſaid Judicatories ſince the Year 1734, how, inſtead of returning to the Lord, they have gone further back, that I fear that Word may be juſtly applied to them, *Jer. viii. 4. 5. Thus ſaith the Lord, Shall they fall, and not ariſe?—Why then is this People of Jeruſalem ſlidden back by a perpetual Backſliding? They hold faſt Deceit, and reſuſe to return;* I have been gradually cleared, and more and more confirmed, that it is our Duty to continue in a State of Seceſſion from them. I ſhould not have troubled you further on this Subject; but ſince you have been pleaſed to give me a Hint at the Scripture Grounds and Reaſons, which you judge to be of Weight with you to determine you to continue in Conjunction with the preſent Judicatories, I judge it my Duty, with all Brotherly and Chriſtian Freedom and Tenderneſs, to lay more fully before you ſome Conſiderations that have cleared my Way, and by which I have been confirmed, in judging it my Duty to concur with my Brethren in teſtifying judicially, and in a Way of Seceſſion from the preſent Judicatories, againſt former and preſent Backſlidings and Deſections that this whole Church and Land ſtand chargeable with: And if my Views are wrong, or if my Reasonings are not juſt, I am willing to be ſet right from the only unerring Rule, the Law and Teſtimony; and I deſire, if my Heart deceive me not, to ly open unto Light from the Lord's Word.

The Queſtion berwixt us is, concerning Communion with the preſent Judicatories of this National Church, Whether it is our Duty to continue to teſtify againſt a Courſe of Backſliding and Deſection in a Way of Union and Conjunction with them, and as Parts of one and the ſame ruling and governing Body? Or if it is not rather our Duty to *come out from among them*, and to bear Teſtimony to injured Truth in a Way of Seceſſion from them? That we may have a more clear and diſtinct View of the preſent Queſtion, I beg Leave to obſerve a few Things wherein I hope we ſhall both agree.

1^{ſt}, There

1st, There is a vast Difference betwixt a Church pointing towards Reformation, or striving to maintain what Purity she has attained unto; and a Church that is losing her Purity, and declining from such Steps of Reformation as she has mercifully reached, and also justifying herself in her Backslidings and Defections: In the former Case, many Things that are wrong and defective ought to be patiently born; but in the latter Case, that is, when a Church is losing her Purity, and declining from Steps of Reformation attained unto, her Backslidings ought to be testified against: And if she is justifying her Backslidings, and refusing to return unto the Lord; and especially, if she justify herself in these, in the Face of Representations and Remonstrances against her Iniquities; then a more solemn Testimony against her is needful, *Jer. xv. 19. And if thou take forth the Precious from the Vile, thou shalt be as my Mouth: Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.*

2^{dly}, When we speak of a Testimony for Truth, the Question is not, If a perfect Testimony can be given by any Sett of Men whatsoever in any Period of the Church against Error or Backsliding from the Lord? All our Testimonies and Witnessings whether judicial or extrajudicial, as well as all our Preachings and Prayers, have their corrupt Mixture; they are still defective either in the Matter or Manner, or in both; they all bear the Print of our foul Fingers upon them: The Honour of giving a perfect Testimony to Truth belongs to the Head and Captain of our Salvation; he alone is the *faithful and true Witness*; his Testimony has a Perfection both of Parts and Degrees, there is nothing wrong and nothing defective in it. But,

3^{dly}, The Question is, Whether or not, when a Church is declining and backsliding from the Purity that she has once attained unto, such a Testimony may and ought to be given unto injured and oppressed Truth, as bears some Proportion unto the Injury that is done by the backsliding Party unto the Truth? A Testimony of this Kind is what I call an adequate Testimony. In yours, you make an *adequate and perfect* Testimony the same Thing: I shall not contend about Words; If you think the Word *adequate* improper, I shall easily part with it; Only I humbly judge, that, in a declining Period of the Church, such a Testimony may and ought to be given (especially by such Office-bearers of the Church who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord) as bears some Proportion unto the Injury that is done to Truth, by the Party who are carrying on a Course
of

of Backsliding: And therefore, when the Judicatories of a Church let go any of the Truths of Christ, or deviate from any Thing that has been adopted as a Point of Truth agreeable to the Word of God, whether it concerns the Doctrine, Worship, Government or Discipline of the Lord's House, a Testimony against them is necessary. And, that the Testimony may bear some Proportion to the Injury that is done to Truth, the following Things appear to me to be needful.

1. That such as aim at Witnessing for the Truth, bear plain and express Testimony to every one of the Truths that are opposed: They ought to maintain and assert the Truth, in direct Opposition unto the Terms in which it is impugned or denied.

2. It is likewise needful, that they point out the particular Steps of Deviation or Backsliding, so far as they can discern in a Church or her Judicatories, from Points of Reformation once attained unto: Both these are necessary from the Lord's express Command, *Rev. ii. 25. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. Rev. iii. 11. Hold that fast which thou hast.* They are necessary for the Conviction of such as are carrying on the Course of Backsliding, and as Means of their Recovery, *Lev. xix. 17.* They are necessary for the Confirmation and Establishment of such as love the Truth, and who desire to cleave to it, *Heb. x. 23, 24.* In a Word, No Point of Truth once received should be knowingly let go, and no publick Sin should be wilfully covered or palliate. If we set our Thumb upon any Divine Truth, or conceal any publick Sin, from any carnal or political Considerations, we grieve the Spirit of Truth, and are unfaithful unto the Trust committed unto us, *Isa. lxiii. 8, 10.*

3. A Testimony ought to be given to Truth in the same publick and express Manner in which the Course of Backsliding is carried on; otherwise the Testimony bears not a due Proportion unto the Injury that is done to Truth. As for Instance; When Truth is opposed from the Press, if the Press is open it ought to be defended from the Press; and, in some Cases, this may be reckon'd a Testimony bearing a Proportion unto the Injury that is done to Truth. Again, when Truth is doctrinally opposed, it ought to be doctrinally maintained and asserted: This may likewise in some Cases be reckoned a Testimony bearing some Proportion to the Injury that is done to Truth. Again, when the Keys of Government and Discipline are perverted by the Office-

Office-bearers of the Church, and when they in their judicative Capacity, instead of censuring the Erroneous, do either screen or protect them; and, instead of asserting and maintaining the Truth, do pass Error without a Testimony against it; and when, instead of supporting the Flock and Heritage of God in these Privileges and Liberties wherewith Christ has made them free, they oppress, break and scatter them; then such as desire to be found faithful to the Lord, if they have Access to meet together, ought in a judicial Capacity to bear Testimony to the Truth, and vindicate the Liberties of the Flock of Christ: Otherwise their Testimony cannot be reckoned to bear a Proportion to the Injury done to Truth, or the Violence and Oppression done to the Lord's Heritage. Yet I observe, in the

4th Place, That when the Bulk and Body of the Office-bearers of the Church carry on a Course of Defection, and when the smaller Part are only grieved with their Proceedings, they ought to use proper Means for reclaiming their sinning and offending Brethren before they associate together by themselves for the Exercise of the Keys: It may be necessary to deal with them to return to their Duty, by Petitions, Representations, or doctrinal Testimonies against them. These and the like Means may be warrantably used, and in some Cases it is Duty to use them, before the smaller Party associate together for the Exercise of the Keys of Government and Discipline.

5. When the smaller Part, that desire to keep the Word of the Lord's Patience, have tried the above and the like Means without Success; and when, notwithstanding of Remonstrances in Judicatories and doctrinal Testimonies against them, the Majority of the Office-bearers of a Church go on resolutely in a Course of Defection from the Lord; Then it is the Duty of such who desire to be found faithful, tho' they may be few in Number, to associate together for the Exercise of the Keys of Government and Discipline, for the Ends for which they are committed unto them by the glorious Head of the Church: And in this Case (call it a *Secession*, or give it any other Name you please) the smaller Part, who desire to discharge their Duty, and to be faithful to the Trust committed to the Office-bearers of the House of God, depart not from the Church, nor from the Ordinances and Institutions of Christ, but leave the corrupt and backsliding Part, and endeavour to do what they are commanded to do, and what all Ecclesiastical Judicatories ought

ought to do, as they would approve themselves unto the Head of the Church, and as they would answer the End and Design of their Appointment and Institution in the New-Testament Church, which is for the Support and Defence of the Truth, *1 Tim. iii. 11.* and *for the Edification* (not for the Destruction) of the Body of Christ.

But in regard you judge that Matters are not as yet come to this Pass in the present Judicatories, that the smaller Part ought to leave the backsliding Part, and associate together for the Exercise of the Keys of the Lord's House; Therefore, the Question betwixt us comes to this, Whether or not, as the Judicatories of this National Church are at present situate, it is Duty to contend in a Way of Conjunction or Communion with them; or, if it is not rather Duty for the sincere (tho' the smaller) Part to leave the corrupt Part, and to associate together for the Exercise of the Keys of Government and Discipline, according to the Word of God, and the Acts and Constitutions of the Church of *Scotland* agreeable thereto; that so they may in a judicial Capacity bear Testimony to the Truths of Christ against the Injuries done to the same; and also that they may bear Testimony in the said Capacity unto the Rights, Liberties, and Privileges of the Subjects of Christ's spiritual Kingdom, against the Violence done them by the present Judicatories; and that they may contribute their Endeavours for their Relief in their present oppressed, broken and scattered Circumstances through the Land? You think the former is Duty, namely, that you ought to contend in a Way of Conjunction with the Judicatories, I suppose by Petitions and Representations given in to them, by Reasonings against them, and by Dissents from their backsliding Courses. Before I consider the Scripture-instances ye adduce to support your Judgment and Practice, allow me to offer a Scripture-argument or two for the Latter, namely, That such is the Situation of the present Judicatories of this National Church, that all who desire to be found faithful unto the Lord ought to leave them, and to associate themselves together for holding up and maintaining a Testimony in a judicative Capacity against the present Course of Backsliding and Defection.

1st, The present Judicatories are carrying on, in their judicative Capacity, a Course of Backsliding and Defection from the Lord; and consequently they are perverting the Keys of Government and Discipline to Ends and Purposes quite opposite to these for which they are committed unto them

them by the Head of the Church: Or, their Authority is exercised, not for the Edification of the Body of Christ, but for their Destruction; and this is done, notwithstanding the ordinary Means have been used to reclaim them: Therefore it is unsafe and dangerous for you to continue in Conjunction with them. I know you will readily grant, that a Course of Backsliding and Defection has been carried on by the Judicatories in their judicative Capacity: The Erroneous have been brought to their Bar, and either assilzied from Process, as in *Mr. Campbell's Case*, or dismissed with a slight Censure, as in *Mr. Simson's Case*; they have refused to assert the Truth in plain and express Terms, in Opposition to the Scheme of dangerous Errors vented by these Men, neither have their Errors been expressly condemned. By these Means Error is supported and countenanced, and Truth is born down and oppressed, likewise a lordly Dominion is exercised over the Heritage of God through the Land. The Crown-rights of the Redeemer have also been openly invaded by the late Act of Parliament appointed to be read in the Churches, and the most Part of the Ministers of *Scotland* have given Obedience to the said Act, and there is a deep Silence in all the Judicatories about the Injury that is done to the Redeemer's Crown and Dignity thereby. These Things you will readily acknowledge: And you cannot refuse that the Judicatories have been dealt with by Instructions, Petitions and Remonstrances; not only by inferior Judicatories unto several General Assemblies, but also by a considerable Body of Ministers, Elders and private Christians through the Land. These Means were essay'd, till four Ministers were thrust out from Communion with the Judicatories by Act of Assembly 1733; and that because they protested for their just Right and Privilege of testifying, on all proper Occasions, against the Backslidings and Defections of this Church: And the Judicatories, to this very Day, do not shew the least Willingness to take with their Iniquities, or to acknowledge the same before the Lord; they still refuse to be ashamed, tho', for many Years bypast, the Course of Backsliding has been carried on with a high Hand, notwithstanding of many Remonstrances against the same. Therefore, since this is the State of Matters with the Judicatories of this National Church, it is unsafe and dangerous for you to continue in Communion and Conjunction with them; and that because, *first*, While you and others continue among them, you are Parts and Members of that ruling and governing Body, who

are carrying on with a high Hand a Course of Defection from the Lord, and refuse to be reclaimed: You are in this Respect one Lump with them. The Apostle's Reasoning is very strong, *Know ye not that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump?* 1 Cor. v. 6. Gal. v. 9. 2dly, While you continue among them, you strengthen their Hands, and harden them in their Sin; in regard, tho' you reason against them, and dissent from them, yet by your Practice you declare that the Courses and Measures that they are pursuing are not *tanti* as to make you leave Communion with them, that they are not *tanti* as to fall under that Command of the Lord by the Apostle, 2 Thess. iii. 14. *And if any Man obey not our Word by this Epistle, note that Man, and have no Company with him, that he may be ashamed.* Tho' Blasphemy against the Son of God, with many other gross and dangerous Errors, have been brought before the Bar of the Judicatories, and tho' no suitable Testimony has been given against them, and tho' they are oppressing and breaking the Heritage of God, and consequently in the Exercise of Government tyrannical; yet they may reasonably conclude, while you continue in Communion with them, that you look upon these Things to be of no such Moment as to make you reckon them such disorderly Walkers from whom you are called to withdraw, 2 Thess. iii. 6. *D. B.* Does not this Practice natively tend to harden them in their Sin? Has it no Influence upon you, to make the just Impressions that ye ought to have of the Dishonour done to God, in the above and the like Instances, by the present Judicatories, more faint and languid upon your own Spirits? Likewise, a Generation of righteous Persons thro' Scotland are thereby grieved, and the Hands of some of your Brethren, who are minting at a judicial Testimony, are also weakened. If these Things are duly weighed in the Balance of the Sanctuary, I fear, that, notwithstanding of your Dissent in Judicatories, ye shall be found Art and Part in the Dishonours done to the Redeemer in his Person and Offices, by such a close Communion and Conjunction with the back-sliding Party.

2dly, When the Judicatories of a Church do, in their judicative Capacity, carry on a Course of Defection from the Lord, and refuse to be reclaimed, it appears to me, from the unerring Rule of the Word, that these who desire to cleave to the Lord, tho' they are the smaller Number, ought to discharge their Duty by associating themselves together, in order to display the Banner of a judicial Testimony

timony for Truth. Before I produce Scripture-precept and Warrant for this, I must premise the following Things; (1.) When I speak of the Duty of the minor Part of the Office-bearers of the Church, to associate themselves together, as said is, it must be understood that they have Access to meet together, and are not hindred by outward Violence, or scattered by Persecution, as is frequently the Case of the Church, *Acts viii. 2.* (2.) I take it for granted, that the Keys of Government and Discipline are given to all the Ministers of the Gospel by the exalted Head of the Church, and that they belong to the pastoral Office as well as the Keys of Doctrine: As also, that such as endeavour to be found faithful to the Lord, have a better Claim to the Keys, than such as are making Use of them in direct Opposition to the Ends and Purposes for which they were given to the Office-bearers of the Lord's House. And I think it would be no difficult Matter to prove, that such who are protecting the Erroneous, and who refuse to condemn Error, or to assert the Truths in Opposition to dangerous Heresies vented and taught, and who are tyrannizing over the Flock and Heritage of God, have forfeit their Claim to the Exercise of the Keys, till they return to their Duty. And that this is the Situation of the present Judicatories of this National Church, may appear from what is said in our judicial Testimony, and from our Testimony emitted 1734, and may be made more evident in due Time. I hope you have such a View of the present State of Matters, that you will acknowledge that the Keys are perverted and abused; that a Course of Backsliding is carried on, and that they refuse to return unto the Lord. And, in this Case, you and your Brethren have the Lord's Call to come out from among them, to associate together, and to hold up a judicial Testimony for Truth: As for Instance, that Command does oblige you to this, *Contend earnestly for the Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, Jude 3.* And the Truths of God are a sacred *Depositum* and Trust delivered unto the Church; when they are opposed and assaulted, the Members of the Church, and especially her Office-bearers, who are particularly appointed and set for the Defence of Truth, ought to contend earnestly for the same. You know the Import of the Greek Word, that it is not an ordinary Contending, but a Contending with the utmost Ardour and Fervency, a Contending with all our Might: It is a Stretching of ourselves to the uttermost in *contending for the Faith*, that is, in upholding, maintaining and defending Truth, in Opposition to

all Attacks made upon it. You reckon that your Dissents in Judicatories are a Contending for the Faith. It is true, that in some Cases they may be a suitable and proper Testimony to Truth: But, when the Judicatories do, in their judicative Capacity, carry on a Course of Detection and Backsliding, and will not be reclaimed, we do not stretch out ourselves to the uttermost in the Defence of Truth, if we satisfy ourselves either with a doctrinal Testimony, or with a Dissent in Judicatories. It is evident, that when the Office-bearers of the Church, who desire to discharge their Duty, have Access to associate and meet together, do contend in a judicative Capacity for Truth, they carry a Testimony somewhat further than by a simple Dissent in Judicatories. Tho', when we have done our utmost, we are far from doing that which is our Duty; yet, if ye join not together to lift up a judicial Testimony for oppressed and born-down Truth, you do not *contend earnestly*; that is, you do not what is in the Compass of your Power to do; you do not what your pastoral Office gives you a Claim and Title to do. If the present Judicatories, in their judicative Capacity, contend earnestly to dismiss the Erroneous from their Bar, and to oppress the Heritage of God through the Land, shall not we contend earnestly, or shall not we display the Banner of a judicial Testimony in the Name of the Head and King of Zion, for wounded and falling Truth in our Streets, and for his oppressed and grieved Subjects, who have been lifting up a Cry throughout all the Corners of the Land, for many Years bypast, for Help and Relief, and who must needs groan under the Yoke and Burden without any Remedy, notwithstanding of all your Remonstrances and Dissents in Judicatories, unless you fall upon more effectual Means for their Relief? Likewise we are commanded, *Phil i. 27 to stand fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, striving together for the Faith of the Gospel.*

The Word *Striving together* is most emphatick. The simple Word signifies, To strive as in a Battle or in a Race. The compound Word, used here, signifies a joint Striving; like those who see the Enemy advancing, they join together to oppose the Enemy. This is the present State of Matters in the Judicatories of the Church of *Scotland*: They are bearing down the Truth in a judicative Capacity; they are scattering the Sheep of the Lord's Pasture. Ought not such as are agrieved under these Church-ruining and rending Courses, *strive together*? Should they not join and associate together for the Defence of Truth? Ye have a
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better Claim to the Exercise of the Keys than they. The Opposition that they make unto the Lord's Truths and People, is an unlawful War; The Power of drawing the spiritual Sword is thereby devolved upon the better, tho' the smaller Part. Ye ought therefore to associate together, and assert the Truths, and do what lies within the Compass of your Power, in a judicative Capacity, for the Relief of the Lord's Heritage and People; otherwise I do not see that you comply with the Command of standing fast in one Spirit, with one Mind, *striving together* for the Faith of the Gospel. If this were sincerely aimed, with that Courage and Resolution that becomes them, by the Lord's sent Ministers in *Scotland*, as it would be the most effectual Check unto a corrupt Party, so it would be a promising Presage that our spiritual Captivity should be returned, that our Wilderness should become a fruitful Field, and that Glory should yet dwell in our Land. I might inforce the present Argument from many other Places of Scripture, such as, *Gal. v. 1. Eph. iv. 14. 15, 16. Col. ii. 2. 2 John ver. 8. Rev. ii. 25.* But, if I should illustrate and confirm the Argument from these and other Places of Scripture, I would swell this Missive beyond all just Bounds, and it is like to come out to a greater Length than at first I intended.

I doubt not but you will alledge, that when you remonstrate in the present Judicatories by your Reasonings, Votes and Protestations, against the sinful and unwarrantable Steps that are taken; that you *strive together* for the Faith of the Gospel. But allow me to suggest unto you, 1st, That your striving in Judicatories is not a *striving together*, it is not a *standing fast in one Spirit and in one Mind*, while there is not a joint Testimony given against the present Course of Defection: You are like broken and scattered Parties, who sometimes turn about and face the Enemy, but the Enemy possess the Field: They have taken the Standard from you; they have set up their Ensigns for Signs, *Psal. lxxiv 4.* 2^{dly}, Your Dissents in Judicatories are not a judicial Testimony; they are indeed some Testimony given in the Court; but a judicial Testimony for Truth is an Act of Ecclesiastical Power and Authority, exercised by the Office-bearers of the Church when constitute in the Name of the Lord Jesus, declaring and asserting the Truths of Christ from his Word, and vindicating the Liberties wherewith he hath made his People free, and condemning Error, and censuring the Erroneous. We have an illustrious Pattern and Example of this in the synodical Meeting at *Fa-*
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Jerusalem, Acts xv. where the Rights and Privileges of the Members of the New-Testament Church are asserted and vindicated, and Sentence is past against the Judaizing Teachers, and they are condemned as such *who troubled the Disciples with Words, subverting their Souls, 24. Verſe.* But, when you diſſent in Judicatories, ye acknowledge that the Keys are perverted, and that Church-power and Authority is abuſed; and tho' your Diſſents and other Means that you uſe have no Influence upon the Judicatories to reclaim them, yet you will not make Uſe of the Keys for the Ends and Purpoſes for which they are committed unto you: And thus, notwithstanding of all your Diſſents, Truth lies wounded and bleeding without a judicial Teſtimony for it; the Heritage of God are oppreſſed, and their Rights and Liberties are never judicially aſſerted and vindicated. And, if thus your Method and Practice is followed, Chriſt ſhall not have an Eccleſiaſtical Court in *Scotland* to do Juſtice to his injured Truths and oppreſſed Members (in a judicial Way) in this Day of grievous Sinning and Backſliding.

3dly, It deſerves our ſerious Conſideration, that the *Vinculum*, or Bond of our Union and Conjunction with the preſent Judicatures of this National Church, is broke; hence our Union with them is diſſolved, therefore we ought to come out from among them, and to teſtify in a Way of Seceſſion from them againſt the preſent Courſe of Deſection.

To illuſtrate and confirm the above Argument and Reaſon for bearing Teſtimony in a Way of Seceſſion from the preſent Judicatories of this National Church, we muſt enquire what is the Bond of our Union and Conjunction in the ſaid Judicatories; and then it muſt be made appear that this *Vinculum* or Bond is broken, and that our Union is thereby diſſolved. And, for clearing the firſt of theſe, I offer the following Things.

1ſt, When we ſpeak of the Bond of our Union and Conjunction in the Judicatories, I hope it will not be alledged, that the Civil Eſta bliſhment granted unto any Church is the *Vinculum*, or Bond of the Union and Conjunction of the Office-bearers of the Church in Eccleſiaſtical Judicatories, or of ſuch Members amongſt themſelves. We will readily agree, that the Countenance of Civil Authority is not neceſſary to the Being of the Church, tho' it is very profitable and uſeful to her outward peaceable Being: As alſo, that the Countenance and Protection of the Civil Magiſtrate, given unto the Judicatories of the Church, in the faithful
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Discharge of their Duty, is a great outward Blessing, promised unto her in New-Testament Times, *Isaiah* xlix. 23. lx. 5, 10. *Rev.* xvii. 16. But when a Course of Backsliding from the Lord is carried on under the Shadow of the Civil Establishment, or when a legal Establishment is reckoned the Bond of Union and Conjunction in Judicatories, then, and in both these Cases, it becomes a Snare to the Church, and is neither promised nor given by the Lord Jesus unto her for any such Ends and Purposes.

2dly, The primary Ligament and Bond of our Union and Conjunction in all Church-Judicatories is *the Word of God*, or the Profession, Acknowledgment, and Belief of the Truth, as it is contained in the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the only infallible and unerring Rule of Faith and Practice, *Isaiah* viii. 20. *Gal.* vi. 16. 2 *Pet.* i. 19. And the secondary Ligament, or Bond of any such Union and Conjunction, are the subordinate Standards of Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline, which have been received and adopted by a Church, as agreeable to, and founded on, the holy Scriptures.

3dly, The Bond of our Union and Conjunction in the Judicatories of this National Church, immediately after the Lord brought us out of Antichristian Darkness, was our *Confession of Faith*, received and approven *Anno* 1560, together with the first and second *Books of Discipline*. The Doctrine contained in the said *Confession of Faith*, and the Government and Discipline of the House of God, as it is held forth from the Word of God in the Books of Discipline, was frequently sworn to in the National Covenant, which was renewed with great Solemnity in the Year 1638. Afterward the *Confession of Faith*, compiled at *Westminster*, together with the Form of Church-Government, and Directory for Worship, agreed upon by the said Assembly, were all received by the General Assemblies of this Church, in the Manner expressed in the several Acts, adopting the same as principal Parts of that Conjunction and Uniformity in Religion, sworn unto in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations. Hence the *Vinculum*, or Bond of our Union and Conjunction in all our Church-Judicatories, is the Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of the Lord's House, held forth from the holy Scriptures in our *Confession of Faith*, *Books of Discipline*, Form of Presbyterian Church-Government, and Directory for Worship; and all Ranks of Persons in this Land are solemnly bound and obliged to abide in the Faith, Profession and Obe-

Obedience of the said Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline, by the National Covenant of *Scotland*, and by the Solemn League and Covenant of the three Nations. But it is much to be regreted, that the Bond of our Union and Conjunction in the Judicatories of this National Church is broke, as will evidently appear, if the following Things are duly considered.

1st, Tho' all Ranks of Persons have been guilty of the Violation of our Solemn Oaths and Covenants, and tho' they have been condemned by several Parliamentary Acts and Deeds, and treated in a most ignominious Manner; yet the Judicatories of this Church have never expressly asserted their perpetual and inviolable Obligation, since our wonderful Deliverance from Tyranny and Slavery in the memorable Year 1688. If the Obligation of our Covenants had been recognized, or if the Covenants National and Solemn League had been appointed to be signed by the Office-bearers of this Church, with Accommodation to our Circumstances; or if one had been made up of both, with Additions and Explications suited to our present Case, and with a solemn Acknowledgment of the publick Breaches and Engagement to the Duties of the Covenants; we had been nearer our reforming Bond of Union and Conjunction in Judicatories, than by the *Formula* 1711, not to mention that general and loose *Formula*, agreed upon by the Assembly 1694, which (and no other) Elders are required to sign to this very Day. And here I may justly observe, that, as these *Formulas* are substitute in the Room of our Solemn National Covenants, we have in so far deviate from our reforming Bond of Union and Conjunction in Judicatories.

2^{dly}, If it is alledged, That in the *Formula* 1711 we have the Substance of our National Oath and Covenant, in regard that, by our signing the said *Formula*, we engage and promise, " That we shall firmly and closely adhere to the
 " Doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith, and to
 " the Purity of Worship practised in this Church, as also
 " to our Presbyterial Government and Discipline; and
 " likewise that we shall, to the utmost of our Power in
 " our Station, assert, maintain and defend the said Doctrine, Worship, Discipline and Government of this
 " Church by Kirk-sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods,
 " and General Assemblies; and that, in our Practice, we
 " shall conform ourselves to the said Worship, and submit
 " to the said Discipline and Government, and never en-
 " deavour

deavour, directly nor indirectly, the Prejudice or Subversion of the same ;" I shall not enter upon the Question, Whether the *Formula* contains the Substance of our National Oath and Covenant ? but I must observe, that, even when the *Formula* 1711 is stated as the Bond of our Union in the present Judicatories of this National Church, the said Judicatories have burst asunder this Bond of our Conjunction in them, and consequently our Union with them is dissolved, as will appear from the following Instances. 1st, *Arminian* Errors, and *Arian* Blasphemies, were brought before the Judicatories in the several Processes against Mr. *Simson*, beside the pernicious and dangerous Errors that have been vented by Mr. *Campbell*; but the present Judicatories are so far from asserting, maintaining and defending in their Station the Doctrine contained in our Confession of Faith, that they have never expressly condemned the Scheme of Errors vented by the foresaid Persons; they have never declared the Errors vented by them to be contrary to the Word of God, and our Confession of Faith, nor asserted the Truth in express Terms, and in Opposition to the said Errors, tho' the Scheme of Divine Truth, contained in our Confession of Faith, is unhinged by them; and therefore the Judicatories of this National Church are justly chargeable with letting slip the Truths that we have heard and received, *Heb. ii. 1.* You know, that Messieurs *Simson* and *Campbell* have pled, That their Doctrines were agreeable to our Confession of Faith; but as Men wrest the Scriptures to their own Destruction, so Confessions of Faith may likewise be abused and perverted: Therefore this should have roused the Judicatories of this Church to assert and vindicate the Truths held forth from the Word of God in our Confession, in Opposition to the daring and bold Insults that were made upon Divine Truth, contained in our Confession of Faith, by Men full of Subtilty, and Enemies to the Truths of God. But since Error has been maintained and defended at the Bar of our Assemblies, and Truth left naked without a judicial Testimony unto it, and since the Edge of Divine Truth has not been directed against the new and different Shapes under which the old *Arian* and *Arminian* Errors have appeared, which is one of the special Uses and Designs of all Confessions of Faith, the Judicatories of this National Church are chargeable with departing from our Standards of Doctrine, and are criminally guilty of counteracting that solemn Promise and Engagement contained in the above-mentioned *Formula*, where-

by they are bound and obliged to assert, maintain and defend, to the outmost of their Power in their Station, the Doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of Faith.

Likewise, our Presbyterian Church Government and Discipline is subverted by the Proceedings of Judicatories for many Years bypast, particularly in the manifold Acts of Violence and Oppression upon the Lord's Heritage through the Land, by the Intrusion of Ministers upon them, and by assuming a privative Authority and Jurisdiction over Presbyteries, in devolving their inherent Power and Authority upon pack'd Committees; as also, by the Acts past by the Assembly *Anno 1733*, with respect to the protesting Ministers, and the Ministers in the Presbytery of *Dunfermline*, whereby new and unwarrantable Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion are imposed. By these, and the like tyrannical and arbitrary Steps, our Presbyterian Frame and Constitution is unhinged, and the Judicatories of the Church have involved themselves in the Guilt of counteracting the above Promise contained in the *Formula*, whereby they engage, That they shall never endeavour, directly nor indirectly, the Prejudice or Subversion of our Government and Discipline. Thus, in all the above weighty and important Instances, the *Vinculum* and Bond of our Conjunction, as it is stated in the *Formula 1711*, is broke; and consequently our Union with the present Judicatories is dissolved: Our Union and Conjunction with them cannot now be that Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, *Eph. iv. 31*. It must be a Conjunction at best for a Series of Protestations against, and Dissents from, them, *i. e.* a Conjunction for War, and not for Peace.

But I am afraid that I exceed the Bounds of a Missive, and therefore I shall not insist further in the Proof that it is our Duty to maintain a Testimony against the Current of Defection, in the Way of Secession from the Judicatories, tho' many other Things might be offered from their present Situation and Conduct. I shall now proceed to take a View of the Scripture-instances that you adduce, which lead you to think that Communion may be held with Churches very corrupt, and especially with such as have given no Testimony at all against gross Heresicks and Heresies taught by them. What you intend to prove by these Instances is (as I humbly judge) that notwithstanding the present Judicatories of this National Church are in many Instances very corrupt, and tho' they have given no suitable

Testimony against gross Heresies that have been taught, nor duly censured the Erroneous, yet you may continue in Communion with them, and that it is not your Duty to testify against their Corruptions in the Way of Secession from them. I shall endeavour, with all the Sincerity and Impartiality I can, to weigh your particular Scripture-instances, and to consider what is the Duty pointed out from them in the present circumstantial Case of this National Church.

The first Instance that you give is that of *Joseph of Arimathea*. Ye might have added *Nicodemus* too, *Luke xxiii. 50. John xix. 38, 39.* They were both Members of the *Jewish Sanhedrim*, and dissented from their atrocious Deed in condemning the Prince of Life. But I cannot see from this Instance that we may warrantably continue in Communion with Judicatories very corrupt. There is one Thing must be proven before ye can make good your Argument from this Example, *viz.* That *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* continued to keep their Seat in the *Jewish Sanhedrim* after that wicked Deed of condemning the Lord of Glory. But this cannot be proven from Scripture; yea, the contrary appears Evident to me: For we find the *Sanhedrim* convened a short Time thereafter, *Acts iv.* and they command the Apostles, *Verse. 18. not to speak at all, nor teach in the Name of Jesus.* You cannot suppose that *Joseph* and *Nicodemus* were present, otherwise you must likewise suppose that they consented to this wicked Command of the *Sanhedrim*, or, which is the same Thing, that they were criminally silent: And I do not find, in any of the After-meetings of the *Sanhedrim* recorded in the Book of the *Acts*, the least Hint that they were present. Hence I think it obvious and plain, that *Joseph* and *Nicodemus*, after they had solemnly dissented from the above wicked Deed of the *Sanhedrim*, left that corrupt Court, and joined themselves to the Society of the Apostles and Disciples of Christ who were testifying against the Corruptions of the *Jewish Church* and State: And therefore I may justly infer from this Instance you have given me, that you should leave the Judicatories of this National Church, where Christ is wounded in his Truths and oppressed in his Members, with a solemn Protestation against them; and that ye should join no more with them while they continue in the present Course of Backsliding and Defection, but rather that ye should join yourself to such as are endeavouring to testify against present and former Corruptions.

Your second Scripture-argument against Seceſſion is taken from our Lord's Epiſtles to the Churches of *Aſia*; and particularly to the Churches of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira*, who had given no Teſtimony at all againſt groſs Hereticks, and Hereſies taught by them: But yet, ſay you, there is no Call to ſeparate from them, tho' the Lord is diſpleaſed with their not cenſuring theſe Hereticks; and they are approved by him in other Reſpects, as *holding faſt his Name*, and that they *had not denied the Faith*, tho' they had not cenſured theſe who had done ſo.

I cannot find any Argument from the Epiſtles to theſe Churches, to ſupport your Conduct and Practice in continuing in Communion with the Judicatories of this National Church: And that becauſe,

1^{ſt}, There is a great and evident Diſparity betwixt the Caſe of the Churches in *Aſia*, and the preſent Judicatories of the Church of *Scotland*: For, in the firſt Place, the Churches you mention are not charged with carrying on a Courſe of Deſection in their judicative Capacity; they are not charged with uſing a tyrannical and lordly Dominion over the Heritage and Flock of God; they are not charged with any direct Countenance and Support given to the Erroneous and Seducers, nor with any poſitive Step of Deſection from Reformation once attained unto. But this is not the State of Matters at preſent in the Judicatories of this Church, as may appear from what is above obſerved: And therefore we have no juſt Claim to the Commendation given to *Pergamos*, Rev. ii. 13. of *holding faſt his Name*; and much leſs to that which is given to *Thyatira*, Ver. 19. *That her laſt Works were more than her firſt*; for ours are daily further from our firſt Works. 2^{dly}, The Churches of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira* are indeed charged with a very hainous and grievous Omiſſion, viz. That there was no Eccleſiaſtical Proceſs againſt the Seducers mentioned, and that Church-cenſures were not inflicted upon them: But then you will grant, that the Sin of the Office-bearers of theſe Churches had been more hainous if a Proceſs had been commenced againſt them, and if they or their Errors had been brought to the Bar of the ſeveral Judicatories of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira*, and if the Seducers had been diſmiſſed without Cenſure, and their Errors without an expreſs judicial Teſtimony againſt them. Now, there is not the leaſt Hint that the Office-bearers of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira* had taken any Notice of them in a judicial Way; yea, the contrary is plainly declared in the ſeveral Epiſtles unto

unto them: But this is the hainous Crime of the Judicatories of the Church of *Scotland*, that the Erroneous have been brought to their Bar, gross and pernicious Errors have been under their Cognizance, and yet the Erroneous are still retained in Ministerial and Christian Communion, and their Errors are never judicially condemned. Thus you see that there is no Parallel betwixt the Case of the Churches you mention and that of the Church of *Scotland*: Nay, the Office-bearers of the Church of *Scotland*, in their judicative Capacity, may be justly charged with a more direct and more exprefs Countenancing and Supporting of Error, than any of the above-mentioned Churches of *Asia*.

But, not to insist upon this, let us consider what is the the Duty pointed out unto us from what the Spirit hath said unto these Churches: And here we may observe, in the first Place, what were the Sins of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira* for which they are reprov'd and condemned. We have the Sin of *Pergamos*, Rev. ii. 14, 15. *But I have a few Things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, &c. So hast thou also them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans; which Things I hate.* And in Ver. 20. *Thyatira's Sin. Notwithstanding I have a few Things against thee, because thou sufferest that Woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a Prophetess, to teach and seduce my Servants, &c.* It is evident that both these Churches are reprov'd and condemned, because the Sword of Discipline was not drawn against the Hereticks and the Seducers mentioned, and because they were tolerate or kept in Communion with them notwithstanding of their cross and abominable Doctrines. Hence the Duty pointed out unto the Churches in *Asia*, and unto the Churches in all succeeding Generations, is to purge out from among them the erroneous Seducers, by inflicting Church-censures upon them, and condemning their Errors: And consequently the Judicatories of the Church of *Scotland* are highly guilty in holding such in Ministerial and Christian Communion with them who have taught *Arian* or *Arminian* Doctrines, and in suffering such to teach who have exalted Self unto the Throne of God, and who propagate other pernicious and Soul-ruining Errors.

2dly, Tho' we are not told from the Scriptures what was the Conduct and Behaviour of these Churches in *Asia* after this solemn Reproof was given them, nor how they entertained the same; yet it cannot be refused that it was their Duty immediately to have set about purging the Churches
of

of these corrupt Seducers: As also, their Sin was more highly aggravated if they despised or neglected the Reproofs given them from Heaven in the several Epistles directed unto them. And we may easily suppose that the Churches of *Pergamos* and *Thyatira* did one of the two; either they did take with the Reproof that was given them and discharged their Duty, or they did it not: If they did take with the Reproof, and set about the Discharge of their Duty, that is, if they judicially condemned these abominable Heresies, and censured the wicked Seducers, then there was no Ground of Secession from them. In like Manner, if the Judicatories of this National Church had discharged their Duty after Representations and Remonstrances given unto them, there would have been no Ground of Secession from them; or, if they would yet return to their Duty, and display the Banner of a faithful Testimony for Truth, and purge the House of God of Hereticks and Intruders, then the Grounds of our Secession would be removed, and we might have the comfortable Prospect of a pleasant and beautiful Unity and Harmony in carrying on the Work of the Lord.

But let us suppose, that the Office-bearers of the Churches above-mentioned did not discharge their Duty, and that the Majority of them at least continued in their former Indolence and Negligence, notwithstanding of the Reproof and Charge given unto them from Heaven; The Question will be, What was the Duty pointed out in these Epistles unto the minor Part, who are supposed to be aggrieved under the Negligence of the major Part, and willing to do their Duty? What you write imports, that you do not see they had a Call to separate from the Majority: But, that we may understand what is the Duty of the smaller Part in this supposed Case, let us take a View of the particular and special Duties that all the Office-bearers of the Churches are directed unto, after the above solemn Reproofs are given unto them. And, 1st, The Angel of the Church of *Pergamos*, or the Office-bearers in that Church are exhorted to *repent*: And this Exhortation is enforced with two weighty Arguments and Motives; the one is, *Or else I will come unto thee quickly*; that is, I will suddenly come in a Way of Judgment against thee: The other Motive follows, *And will fight against them* (to wit, the *Nicolaitans*) *with the Sword of my Mouth*; that is, I will take the Work in mine own Hand. As if it had been said unto this Angel, If thou spare these wicked Men, and do not thy Duty with reference to them, I myself will come in

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another Way, and lay thee by, and follow my Purpose in sentencing and censuring of them, by some other Mean. *Durb. in Loc.* As for the Duty this Angel is exhorted unto, **REPENT**; it certainly includes two Things, 1. A Call to be humbled before the Lord for his Negligence in the Exercise of Church-discipline. 2. A Command to return to his Duty, and the faithful Discharge of the same, in purging out, by Ecclesiastical Process and Censure, the *Nicolaitans* from among them. All the Office-bearers of the Church are charged to repent: When the Command is given to every one to repent, can we suppose, that if the Majority continued still in the Neglect of their Duty, that the lesser Part, who were sensible both of their Sin and Duty, should by the Sloth and Negligence of the greater Part be excoemed from the Discharge of their Duty? Or, which is the same Thing, if the greater Part refused to repent, ought not the lesser Part therefore to repent? Nay, the Command to repent, with the awful Certification annexed, ought to have roused up all or any, tho' the smallest Number of the Office-bearers of that Church, to have displayed the Banner of a judicial Testimony against the abominable *Nicolaitans*, that they might have delivered at least their own Souls from the Judgment threatened. And as the Command to repent was a plain Warrant even for the lesser Part to make use of the Keys of Government and Discipline for mainraining and supporting Truth; so, if they had made use of the Keys accordingly, they had discharged their Duty, give it the Name of *Separation*, *Secession*, or what other Name you please.

As for the Duty required of the Office-bearers of the Church of *Thyatira*, it is expressed in the following Manner, v. 24, 25. *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, As many as have not this Doctrine, and who have not known the Depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other Burden, But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come.* From the first of these Verses it is evident, that severals in the Church of *Thyatira* were carried away with *Jezebel's* corrupt Doctrines, several Members of that Church, who are called the Lord's Servants, v. 20. were seduced: It is also plain, that a Part of that Church were kept pure and clean from *Jezebel's* pernicious Doctrines. The Duty enjoined them is called a *Burden*, not as if any Duty were burdensom in itself, but in regard of the Obligation that they are laid peremptorily under to discharge it, and because of the Difficulties and Trials that might

might attend the Discharge of the same; and the Burden itself, and *none other*, which is laid upon them, is exprest in the 25th v. *But that which ye have already, hold fast*; that is, Hold fast the Purity which ye have attained unto, or the good Work that the Lord had wrought for you and amongst you. The Command to hold fast, implies they were in Danger of losing their former Purity by the Doctrines of *Jezebel*, and by their own Slackness and Negligence in the Exercise of Church-discipline against these seducing Teachers; and therefore the Command to hold fast, not only points out the Duty of every one to keep himself pure from these gross Corruptions that were in this Church, but it is a Charge given in a special Manner to her Office-bearers to hold fast in a judicial Way the Purity that they had attained unto, by censuring *Jezebel*, or those that were seduced by her. If this is not the Meaning, then the Remedy prescribed, or the Duty enjoined, is not at all proportioned nor suited unto the weighty Reproof that is given the Office-bearers of this Church for suffering *Jezebel* to teach and seduce the Lord's Servants, as in the 20. v. Further, when they are commanded to hold fast, it is evident that it is the purer Part of this Church, whoever they were, whether the smaller or the greater Part, who are commanded and charged to lift up the Standard of a judicial Testimony against the Corruptions that had crept in amongst them, by censuring the Seducers, and condemning their corrupt Doctrines: And there is just Ground to apprehend that even the purer Part in these Churches did neglect this Duty, and that a faithful judicial Testimony was not kept by them; whereby they gradually corrupted themselves more and more, till at length they were utterly rejected, and their House is long ago left desolate. Upon the whole, it appears evident to me from what the Spirit says unto the Churches in *Asia*, that when the Majority of the Office-bearers in a Church, after Calls and Warnings given them, refuse to condemn Error, and to bear Testimony to the Truths of God, or to purge out the Erroneous from amongst them, that then, and in this Case, the smaller Part, even tho' few in Number, that desire to approve themselves unto the Lord, have his Command, Call and Warrant to associate together, and to exercise the Keys of Government and Discipline, for asserting the Truth, for condemning Error and censuring the Erroneous, and for doing what in them lies for the Help and Relief of the Heritage of God when they are oppress'd and ruled with Rigour by corrupt Judi-

Judicatories: And when they associate together for these Ends and Purposes, they are not guilty of making a Schism and Rent in the Church, or of Separation and Secession from the Church; they only leave the corrupt Party, and are endeavouring to discharge their Duty; they are holding that fast which they have attained unto; they are doing what all the Office-bearers of the Church ought to do by vertue of the Authority and Command of the great Head of the Church unto them every one, and what their several Offices do oblige them unto.

A *Third Instance* you give is that of the Churches planted by the Apostles, "Especially *Galatia* and *Corinth*, "who were greatly degenerate, and in *Corinth* were such "as denied the Resurrection, whereby the whole Christian "Doctrine was ruined; yet no Separation from them is "injoined, nor is there any Account that they had censured them."

What I have observed above, with respect to the Churches of *Asia*, may be very well applied to the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia*. I shall only further notice in a few Words, That the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* vi. 6, 7. commands the Office-bearers in *Corinth*, to purge out the old Leaven, for this Reason, *Know ye not that a little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump?* Likewise the Churches of *Galatia*, where corrupt Doctrines were disseminate, are commanded to stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, *Gal.* v. 1. And for the very same Reason, in the 9th Verse, *A little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump.* If the Office-bearers of the Churches of *Corinth* and *Galatia* were charged to purge out the Scandalous and Erroneous from among them, and that because a *little Leaven leaveneth the whole Lump*, then it is plain, that, if the Bulk and Body refuse to do their Duty, the lesser Part, who desire to approve themselves unto the Lord, were, upon the same very Reason and Ground, authorised and warranted to exercise the Key of Discipline for purging the House of God; and, if they neglected to do their Duty, it is plainly declared, that they should be held and repute as a Part of the corrupt and leavened Mass and Lump. I might also argue from the Apostle's Command and weighty Reasonings, 2 *Cor.* vi. 15, 16, 17. For, tho' Communion with Idolaters in their idolatrous Worship seems to be mainly intended in the Place, yet the Apostle's Reasonings for Separation from such Communion may be extended with the same Force and Weight unto withdrawing from Communion with corrupt and degenerate Churches;

Churches, and especially from Communion with such, where Errors are maintained that overthrow the whole Christian Doctrine.

I shall only further observe, That your Argument, as you have laid it from the Church of *Corinth*, proves too much, and what none of our reformed Divines, since our Secession from *Rome*, have, so far as I know, asserted, *viz.* That we may warrantably hold Communion with Churches so very corrupt, and where such damnable Heresies are vented, whereby the whole Christian Doctrine is ruined and overthrown.

I have now endeavoured to consider the Weight of all your Scripture-Arguments for justifying your Sentiments and Practice in continuing in Ministerial Communion with the present Judicatories of this National Church; and, after all, I must own, that I am more confirmed from the Enquiry that I have been essaying to make into the above Scripture-Passages which you have adduced, that such is the State and Situation of the present Judicatories of this National Church, that all who would desire to be found faithful unto the Lord ought to leave them, and to associate themselves together, for holding up and maintaining a Testimony in a Judicative Capacity against the present Course of Backsliding and Defection; and this is what I undertook to prove, as I stated the Question in the Entry.

There are some other Things contained in your Letter, upon which I beg Leave to suggest a Word or two, with as much Brevity as I can.

You say, " That you hope the Presbytery of whom you are a Member, of whom none have read the late Act of Parliament, will not decline a judicial Testimony. "

I desire to bless the Lord, that all the Members of your Presbytery have been preserved from that Snare; and if they shall agree upon a free and faithful judicial Testimony to injured Truth, and against present and former Defections of this Church and Land, I am sure it would be Matter of Joy to many that fear the Lord, and a promising Token for Good, under the many cloudy and breaking Providences of our Day, *Psal.* lx. 1, — 5. But then, if your Presbytery shall agree upon such a Testimony, and if it is not adopted by the superior Judicatories, I do not see how you can continue in Conjunction with them: If the said Judicatories shall either condemn or neglect your Testimony,

Testimony, it is the same Thing; your continuing in either of these Cases in Conjunction with them, would be a material giving up with the same. Besides, as none of you have read the late Act of Parliament, how can you continue in Conjunction with such Judicatories, where the most Part of the constituent Members have, in some Shape or other, read the said Act? And you will grant that the reading of it is at least a practical giving up with the sole Headship and Sovereignty of Christ over his House, and consequently they have changed their Holding, and taken their Holding in the Exercise of their Ministerial Office from the Civil Powers. And tho' the greatest Part of your Synod have not read the Act, yet they are involved in that Guilt if they do not censure the Readers, and emit a faithful Testimony against the Dishonour done to the Head of the Church by the imposing and reading of the same; and, if the next General Assembly shall do nothing this Way, it is become the Sin of this National Church, and a new Ground of Secession from them.

You further add, That you are of the same Mind with the blest Mr. *Boston*, upon the Head of Church-Communion, exprest in his Book, intituled, *The Crook in the Lot*, or rather, *The Sovereignty and Wisdom of God displayed in the Afflictions of Men*, &c. You have not directed me to the particular Place you point at; but I judge you have in your Eye what is said, Page 171. in his Discourse on 1 Cor. x. 17. where he observes, "That Saints must separate from
" all false Worship, that is, Worship which is not instituted by God himself wholly, but is mixt with human
" Inventions and Ordinances, *Rev.* xviii. 4. He adds,
" Where the Worship is pure, but some sinful Thing is
" imposed upon you as a Term of Communion with the
" Worshipers, you must refuse Communion with them on
" these Terms, *Rom.* iii. 8. In these Cases Separation is
" not only lawful, but a necessary Duty: And, if I could
" perceive either of these in our Case in the Communion
" of this Church, I should not only think it my Duty to
" separate, but also to press you to it. But, tho' our Mother has gone far back, she has not gone that Length
" yet."

I very much regard the Judgment of that worthy and great Man; but yet I cannot but notice, that our Reverend Brethren, the Publishers of that Book, in their Preface acquaint us, that the Revising of it was amongst his last Works; and they leave it to exercise the Reader's Attention,

tion, how far he himself revised, and where we have only his Notes (say they) as he preach'd them. I humbly judge, with all Submission unto them, that they ought to have told us plainly how far it was revised by himself: Tho' we have several excellent Things in that Discourse on the foresaid Text, yet when I observed, in reading, that there is not such a distinct and plain Connection in some of the Heads of the said Discourse, and that some Things are not guarded in the Manner that is usual with that great and good Man in his other Writings, I was led to think that it was never revised by himself. And, as to the above-mentioned Passage, one may conclude from it, that one may lawfully and warrantably receive Ordinances dispensed by Intruders, or such who have not the Lord's Call and Mission to labour amongst them, and that because the Worship is pure, and because nothing sinful is required and imposed as a Term of Communion with the Worshipers: And accordingly this very Argument is made use of to perswade People, that it is their Duty to receive Ordinances dispensed by such as are violently thrust upon them in the several Corners of the Land; yea, this very Argument was made use of to perswade People to submit to the Ministry of Prelatick Incumbents in the late Times of Prelacy. But I am perswaded this was far from being the Sentiment of that great and good Man, and that he would never condemn People for their withdrawing from Ordinances dispensed by such as are intruded upon them, even tho' the Worship should be pure, and tho' no sinful Term of Communion should be required of the Worshipers.

But, since I have not stated the Question and Argument in this Missive concerning Communion in Worship, but only concerning Union and Conjunction in the present Judicatories of the Church, therefore the above Passage of Mr. *Boston's* Discourse has no Concern in the present Argument: Yet, in regard it is frequently said that we may and ought to join in Communion with a Church where no sinful Terms of Communion are imposed, and that Secession from the present Judicatories is unlawful and unwarrantable, in regard that no sinful Terms of Communion are imposed (and, if I do not mistake you, this is what you intend by your mentioning Mr. *Boston* on the Head of *Church-communion*) I shall only suggest a few Things on this Subject.

1st, I do not see that it holds universally true, that we ought not to make a Secession from a Church where no sinful

ful Terms of Communion are imposed upon the Worshippers. I may suppose the Bulk of a Church should declare themselves *Arian* (as has been sometimes the dismal State of Matters in the Christian Church) yet in the mean Time they should not impose it upon you as a Term of Communion with them to embrace the *Arian* Scheme; I doubt if you would think it safe for you to join either in Ministerial or Christian Communion with them. But let me give you an Instance nearer our Doors: A considerable Body of the Dissenters in *Ireland* have rejected *Confessions of Faith*, they will not allow them to be Tests of Orthodoxy; and they think it sufficient in order to Church-communion, that Men profess and acknowledge their Belief of the Holy Scriptures, the only unerring Rule of Faith and Life, or that they declare their Belief of the Truth in express Scripture-terms: Surely this is nowise a sinful Term of Communion; yet our worthy Brethren in *Ireland*, who are sensible that *Confessions of Faith* have been an Eye-sore to the Adversaries of Truth in all Ages of the Church, and who esteem them as proper and suitable Means of acknowledging and confessing the Truth when opposed and subverted by the *Sleight of Men*, and their *cunning Craftiness whereby they ly in wait to deceive*, have judged it their Duty to make a Secession from these who have discarded *Confessions*, and to associate together in separate Synods and Presbyteries from them; and I humbly conceive their Conduct and Practice may be very well justified. Therefore, if such Expressions as these, That it is unlawful and unwarrantable to declare a Secession from a Church where sinful Terms of Communion are not required of the Worshippers, or that we are to join in Communion where no sinful Terms of Communion are imposed, shall be taken in their full Meaning and Extent, they may be improved to support the *Latitudinarian* Scheme, which is so much the Idol and Darling of too many in the present Age.

2dly, You know, that, in the several Papers emitted by the seceding Brethren, they have made it appear, that by the Acts of Assembly past *Anno 1733*, both against the protesting Ministers, and against the Ministers of your Presbytery, new and unwarrantable Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion are imposed upon the Ministers and Members of this Church; and tho' it may be alledged that these Acts are not put in Execution, yet they are standing and binding Acts and Constitutions; and, seeing they are not repealed, they must be reckoned Terms of Union

Union and Communion with this National Church: And, if the worthy Minister you mention had lived a little longer, he would have had Occasion to see, and Ground to lament, some further Steps and Lengths of Degeneracy and Backsliding in the present Judicatories, which he was not a Witness unto in his own Time.

I have now considered every Thing contained in your Missive; I am afraid I have wearied you with too much Writing on the Subject: If any Thing has drop'd from my Pen to the Prejudice of that Cause and Testimony which my Brethren and I judge our Duty to espouse and hold, it is only to be imputed to myself. I am not, in writing this, in Concert with any of my Brethren, and none of them have seen it before I have sent it unto you. If there is any Weight in what I have writ, I hope you will examine it without Partiality or Prejudice; and that you will seriously consider, whether or not you are called to join with that small Handful of your Brethren, who are, by a remarkable Series and Train of Divine Providences, led forth without the Camp, and who, tho' they are despised and reproached, yet I hope, in this Cause, they bear his Reproach, *Heb. xiii. 13.* I know it is alledged, That they might be more useful in the Judicatories, than by continuing in their present Situation; but, from what is offered above, I hope it will appear that it is their Duty to continue to bear Testimony against present and former Backslidings and Defections, in the Way of Secession from the Judicatories of this National Church: And tho' it is but little that they have done, or can do, yet they have been endeavouring, through the Lord's Assistance, to lift up a judicial Testimony for Truth; and this I take to be a considerable Step, however it may be run down and despised by many, both Ministers and Professors. They are also essaying to use the proper Means for the Relief of the Lord's oppressed Heritage through the Land, and I do not see that you can do any of these in your present Situation. And if your seceding Brethren cannot do more, or if the Lord's Work in their Hands is despised on account of the Paucity of their Number, on whom shall the Blame be laid? Even upon you, and others of their Brethren, that will not put to their Shoulders to bear a Part of the Burden with them. May not the following Words be justly applied to the present Case, *Judges v. 16. Why abodest thou among the Sheepfolds, to hear the Bleatings of the Flocks? For the Divisions of Reuben there were great Searchings of Heart.* But tho' our Divisions

Divisions and Breaches be lamentable, yet that Promise may be comforting and refreshing, *Isaiah lii. 8. Thy Watchmen shall lift up the Voice, with the Voice together shall they sing; for they shall see Eye to Eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. May the Lord hasten it in his own Time and Season.*

Perth, April 8.
1738.

I am,

R. D. B.

Your's most affectionately,

WILLIAM WILSON.



POSTSCRIPT.

THIS Letter was written without the least Intention of publishing it; but two neighbouring Brethren, having seen a Copy thereof after the Principal was sent off, were of Opinion, that, if it were made publick, it might be of Use to give some Light into the State of the Question betwixt the seceding Brethren and the Judicatories; the Case being still mistaken by many, and industriously misrepresented by others. When this Motion was made, the Reverend Brother to whom the Letter was sent was acquainted therewith, and he was pleased to give Way to the publishing of it; but at the same Time he did plainly insinuate, That it had not given him Satisfaction with reference to the Conduct of the seceding Brethren.

Tho' the publishing of this Missive was urged upon the above and other Considerations, yet all Thoughts of this Kind were quite laid aside 'till some Days ago, when *An Essay on Separation* by the Reverend Mr. Currie Minister at *Kinglassie* came to my Hands; wherein I found the State of the Question so much perplexed and involved, and the Conduct of the seceding Brethren so grossly misrepresented, and the grievous Charge of Schism and Separation, of Renting, Dividing, Breaking and Ruining the Church, so unjustly laid against them; that I thought it was necessary that something should be done in the mean Time, in order

to a fair and clear Stating of the Case betwixt the said Brethren and the present Judicatories of this National Church, till they shall have Time and Opportunity jointly to consider upon the proper Means for vindicating their Conduct from the unjust Aspersions that are thrown upon the same : And I humbly judge that they will be under no Difficulty to vindicate the Cause and Testimony they maintain, notwithstanding of what is alledged to the Prejudice of the same in this voluminous Essay. If they are of a critical Temper, they may find abundance of Matter for exercising such a Talent in every Page almost of this large Performance ; Or, if they shall choose, instead of Argument and Reasoning, to deal in Citations from great and learned Men, and at the same Time do not consider against whom their Argument is laid by these famous Authors, and how it is applied by them, they may amuse and bemist their Readers, and leave them as much in the Dark about the true State of the Question, when they have done with reading their bulky Performance, as when they began.

I do not pretend to attempt a direct Reply to a Book wherein so many *Reverend Brethren* are concerned ; but I hope I shall be excused if I make a few Remarks upon it, till they have Time and Leisure to consider what Notice it deserves : And, in the mean Time, wherein I fail or mistake in stating the Case, it is to be imputed to myself alone, and not to any other of my *seceding Brethren*.

The Reverend Mr. Currie represents the *Brethren* as *Separatists* from the Church (*from the true Church of Christ, &c.*) Chap. 1. and throughout his Book : Yet he cannot but know that they have always refused that their Secession is stated from the *true Church of Christ*, or from the *Church of Scotland*. 1st Testimony, p. 45. they own, that they have declared a Secession from the present Judicatories of this National Church, *In regard they are breaking down out beautiful Presbyterian Constitution, and pursuing such Measures as actually corrupt, or have the most direct Tendency to corrupt, the Doctrine contained in our excellent Confession of Faith, and imposing new Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion.* Thus their Secession is stated in the foresaid Testimony, p. 45, 46. and they have endeavoured to prove the above Charge against the present Judicatories ; but Mr. C— has never once entred into the Argument as it is laid in the said Testimony, altho' he frequently alledges that the Brethren have in their Act and Testimony determined some disputable Points, and also that they are guilty of some

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palpable Mistakes (which Allegations may be considered in due Time) yet they may challenge him to point out any Principle adopted by them in the Papers they have emitted, and particularly in their Presbyterial Act and Testimony, that is not agreeable to the Word of God, and our other subordinate Standards of Doctrine, Worship, Government and Discipline: Nay, they have endeavoured particularly and expressly to testify against the gross doctrinal Errors that have been vented, and the sinful perverting and abusing of the Keys of Government and Discipline that take Place in this Day of Degeneracy and Defection. Must they therefore be reckoned Separatists from the *true Church* of Christ? He tells us, Page 9 "That *Rutherford*, when speaking of the Popish Ceremonies of the Church of Old England, says, *We teach Separation from these Ceremonies to be lawful, but not from the Churches.*" The Application of his Words to the present Case is very obvious. The Question then is, If a Departure from Communion with the present Judicatories of this National Church, because for several Years bypast they have been carrying on a Course of Defection from our received and Covenanted Principles, and refuse to be reclaimed, is a Separation from the Church of *Scotland*, or from the true Church of Christ? But it is necessary, in order unto a further clearing of the Question, that I consider more particularly what is advanced by Mr. C — e in his 1. Chap. where, p. 2. at the Head, he says, "I humbly think it cannot be denied the Church of *Scotland* is yet a true Church of Christ; for all the Marks of a true Church are still to be found in her."

If I were to indulge a critical Humour, I might observe, that, according to Mr. C — e, a Church may be a *true Church* of Christ, and yet want the *Marks* of a *true Church* of Christ: For, Chap. 4. he mentions six Grounds of Separation from a Church. His Grounds of Secession are; Damnable Heresies maintained in her Standards, Idolatry in Worship, cruel and intolerable Tyranny in Government, &c. And he begins his fifth Chap. thus; "Separation from a true Church, except in the above and like Cases, was always reckoned a hainous Sin by the Judicious and Tender, &c." If his Words have any Sense and Meaning, they bear, That a Church may be a true Church, and yet the above and like Things may be found in her; and consequently she may want all the Marks of a true Church which he had given. The Reverend Mr. C — e thinks fit to manage the Argument, for the most Part thro' his Per-

formance, with Criticisms of this Kind; and with far less Shadow of Reason he treats after this Way, not only the Presbytery's *Act and Testimony*, but even Acts of reforming Assemblies: But I hope the seceding Brethren shall never trifle after this Manner in handling such a grave and important Subject.

I agree with Mr. C——e in the Marks that he gives of a true Church, from the 16th *Article* of our *first Confession of Faith*, as they are laid in the said *Confession*; tho' I may differ widely from him in the Application of them. And here I shall take them particularly under Consideration, and enquire if they can be justly applied unto the Church as represented in her present Judicatories: For the Question, as I have once and again observed in the *Missive*, is concerning the Warrantableness of Secession from the present Judicatories of this *National Church*.

The first *Note* or *Mark* whereby the true Church of God is known and discerned from the *filthy Synagogues*, according to the foresaid *Confession*, is, "The true Preaching of the Word of God, wherein God hath revealed himself unto us, as the Writings of the Prophets and Apostles do declare." I might here observe, that the *Preaching of the Word* may be considered as it is an instituted Mean for gathering and constituting a *visible Church*. The Word may be purely preached amongst a Company of Pagans and Infidels for their Conversion; But this does not prove them to be a Church, far less a true Church of Christ. Mr. Currie may see more to this Purpose in *Rutherford's Peaceable Plea*, Chap. 9. But when the true Preaching of the Word is considered as a *Note* or *Mark* of a true visible Church, unto which we may safely join, then it includes, according to the Citation given us from Mr. Gillespie (by Mr. C——e, p. 3d) a *maintaining* and *professing* the *true Doctrine* and the *true Faith*; which, says Mr. Gillespie, "is by all Protestant or *hodox* Writers made one (yea, the principal) *Mark* of a true visible Church." And where the true Doctrine and the true Faith is maintained and professed, such Errors as are vented and taught, to the Prejudice and Subversion of the same, must needs be disclaimed and condemned. Likewise, in order to the maintaining of the true Doctrine and the true Faith, it is not enough that the Office-bearers of the Church do hold forth the same doctrinally; the Faith must be held forth judicially by the Church-representative in their judicative Capacity, 1 *Tim.* iii. 15. The Question then is, If the present Judicatories of

of this Church maintain the true Doctrine and the true Faith, and if they have disclaimed and condemned such Errors as have been vented among us to the Prejudice and Subversion of the same? Mr. C——e asserts, "That her Standards of Doctrine are pure, and that she allows of no Errors in Doctrine, p. 2." But tho' her Standards of Doctrines are pure, yet, if it is considered, how many dangerous Errors have been vented, and after what Manner they have been maintained and defended, and if the Conduct and Behaviour of the Judicatories is impartially examined, it will be found to be a gross Mistake, that the Church, as represented in her present Judicatories, *allows of no Errors in Doctrine*. And, to illustrate this, I make the following Observes:

1st, A Scheme of dangerous Principles, vented and taught by Mr. Simson, was brought before the Judicatories of this Church in the first Process commenced against him, whereby the *federal Representation* of the first Adam, with many sacred Truths connected therewith, were either expressly impugned or subtilly undermined.

2^{dly}, Mr. S——n pled before the Judicatories, That his pernicious Principles were nowise inconsistent with our *Confession of Faith*, and that they were very agreeable to the Scheme of Divine Truth laid down therein.

3^{dly}, Mr. S——n was dismissed from Process by the Assembly 1717, without so much as a Rebuke given him for venting such dangerous Errors; Likewise, that Assembly never declared any of his Errors to be contrary to the Word of God. They observe in general, "That Mr. S——n hath adopted some *Hypotheses* different from what are commonly used among orthodox Divines, and that are not evidently founded on Scripture, and tend to attribute too much to natural Reason and the Power of corrupt Nature." They likewise observe, "That he hath used some Expressions that bear, and are used by Adversaries in, a bad and unsound Sense, tho' he doth disown that unsound Sense." It is to be regreted, that the Cause of Truth was managed after this Manner. Mr. Simson's dangerous Propositions, maintained by him in his Defences, are called *Expressions* and *Hypotheses*. Again, they are not declared to be such as, in the obvious Meaning and Sense of the Word, can only bear an unsound Sense. Besides, they are only declared to be such Hypotheses as are not evidently founded on the Scripture; but none of them are found by the Assembly to be contrary to

the Scripture. It is not said, they attribute too much to Natural Reason and the Power of corrupt Nature; but only that they *tend* to attribute too much, &c. So very mild was that Assembly to Mr. *Simson*: And, after all, every one is left to conjecture, in the midst of a vast many Propositions contained in his Defences, what are these Expressions and Hypotheses that the Assembly intended. Is this the Way to maintain the true Doctrine and the true Faith held forth from the Word of God in our *Confession of Faith*? Is it the Way to disclaim and disallow Errors in Doctrine? And is not the Sin of the present Judicatories more highly aggravate when it is considered, that the Assembly's Committee, *Anno* 1727, found that Mr. *Simson* continued to teach the very same Principles? Yet, to this very Day, the Judicatories of this Church have never told what is Truth, what is Error, in Mr. *S — n*'s Scheme, as it lies in the first Process: They have never condemned any one of his erroneous Propositions maintained by him in his Defences, as contrary to the Word of God and our *Confession of Faith*; all is past over in Silence to this very Day. Likewise, when Mr. *S — n* is brought before the Judicatories for impugning and denying the true Deity and Necessary Existence of our Lord Jesus, and the numerical Oneness of the Three adorable Persons, how did he trifle and quibble before the *Presbytery of Glasgow* and the *Assembly's Committee*? Did he not maintain and assert the Agreement of his Doctrine with our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*? And in the most liberal Acknowledgment that he makes, and it is not made till he is driven unto it, he never makes Confession that he had vented or taught any Thing contrary to the Word of God or our *Confession of Faith*. And, what is the Conduct of Judicatories in this important Matter? There is no adequate Censure inflicted upon him; yea, further, none of his blasphemous Errors are expressly condemned, as contrary to the Word of God and our *Confession of Faith*: Neither is the Truth asserted in direct Opposition unto the Terms in which Mr. *S — n* made his insolent and bold Attacks upon it. But Mr. *C — e* affirms, p. 117. That the Assembly 1729 asserted plainly the *proper supreme Deity* of our Lord Jesus; and, p. 141. That they plainly, and in positive Terms, assert the same. The Words of the Assembly, in their Act suspending Mr. *S — n* (which Mr. *C — e* cites) are as follow, "The General Assembly do observe with great Pleasure and Thankfulness, that God hath happily directed all the Judicatories of this Church
" which

“ which have had this Process under their Consideration,
 “ that there hath not appeared the least Difference of Sen-
 “ timent: But, on the contrary, there hath been the most
 “ perfect and unanimous Agreement among them, as to the
 “ Doctrine of the glorious Trinity, and the *proper supreme*
 “ *Deity* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, according as
 “ the same is revealed in the holy Scriptures, and con-
 “ tained in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*.” This
 is what Mr. C——e reckons a positive and plain Asserting
 of the *proper supreme Deity* of the Son of God. But, as
 has been observed, the Deity of the Lord Jesus is not at
 all asserted in Opposition unto the Terms in which it was
 impugned and denied by Mr. S——n. And further, if our
Reverend Brother had duly considered the Shape in which
 the *Arian* Scheme has come out in the present degenerate
 Age, he might have known that our modern *Arians* will
 acknowledge a *proper supreme Deity* in the Person of the
 Son, in a Consistency with their own Scheme: As also, he
 might have known that Mr. *Simson* could have subscribed
 to the Words of the Assembly’s Act, according to his own
 Sense and Meaning of it, without disclaiming his darling
 Proposition, That the Terms, *Necessary Existence, Supreme*
Deity, and the Title of The only true God, may be taken, and
are by some Authors taken, in a Sense that includes the personal
Property of the Father, and so not belonging to the Son; as also,
 in a Consistency with what is contained in his first Letter to
 the Presbytery of *Glasgow*, That if the Words *Summus*
Deus (or Most high God) were taken in such a Latitude as
 to include the Father’s personal Property, as they are by some
 Authors, they could not in that Sense be truly affirmed of the
 Son: Whence he concludes, That he might have said,
 when he read in *Pictet*, that *Christus est Summus Deus*, it
 was to be understood *cum grano salis*. From what is said
 it is evident, that the present Judicatories of this Church
 have never particularly nor expressly condemned Mr. S——n’s
 blasphemous Propositions, as contrary to the Word of God
 and our *Confession of Faith*.

With respect to Mr. *Campbell*’s Errors, many of them
 are particularly condescended upon in the *judicial Act* and
Testimony: And, if it is owned that a Scheme of dangerous
 Principles has been vented by him, it cannot be refused
 that they have been brought to the Bar of our Judicato-
 ries, and that he has not been censured in the least; as also,
 that his gross and dangerous Errors have never been con-
 demned.

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From what is above observed, the Question is, If the present Judicatories of this National Church maintain the true Doctrine and the true Faith; and if they allow no Errors in Doctrine, even tho' many gross and dangerous Errors have been brought to their Bar, and not one of them have been particularly and expressly declared to be contrary to the Word of God and our *Confession of Faith*, and tho' the Broachers and Venters of these Errors have been dismissed, either without any Censure at all, or without any Censure proportioned unto the grievous Scandal and Offence they have given? And, when the Question is thus stated, every unprejudiced Person may judge, whether or not it can be affirmed of the present Judicatories of this National Church, that they maintain the true Doctrine and the true Faith, and that they allow of no Errors in Doctrine; and consequently, if they have a just Claim and Title to the first above-mentioned Note or Mark of a *true visible Church*, whereby she is distinguished, as the *Confession* expresses it, from the *filthy Synagogues*.

The Reverend Mr. Currie alledges, Page 26th, That
 "such who are licensed to preach the Gospel, are solemnly
 "engaged to assert, maintain and defend the Doctrine con-
 "tained in our excellent *Confession of Faith*; and also, that,
 "at their Ordination, of new they come under the same
 "Engagements, and do expressly disown all *Popish*, *Arian*
 "Socinian and other Doctrines, Tenets and Opinions what-
 "soever, which are contrary to and inconsistent with the
 "foresaid *Confession of Faith*." This is adduced by him to
 prove, that the present Judicatories adhere to the Doctrines
 contained in our excellent *Confession of Faith*: But I must
 tell him, it is one Thing to sign an Adherence to our *Con-
 fession of Faith*, and another Thing to acknowledge the
 Truths as they are laid down in our *Confession of Faith*; just
 as it is one Thing to profess a Belief of Scripture-truth,
 and another Thing to believe and acknowledge the true and
 genuine Sense of the holy Scriptures. The Case stands
 plainly thus: Messieurs S ——— and C ——— I have pled,
 That their Doctrines are noway inconsistent with, but very
 agreeable to, our *Confession of Faith*; and the present Judi-
 catories, tho' they had their several Errors under their Cog-
 nizance, have never expressly nor particularly condemned
 them as inconsistent with the said *Confession*: The Question
 therefore is, Whether or not such as are licensed or or-
 dained to the holy Ministry may not justly reckon, that they
 may warrantably sign our *Confession*, and make the above so-
 lemn

solemn Declaration, in a Consistency with their adopting Messieurs S ——— n and C ——— l's Scheme; for this very Reason, That the present Judicatories, who require the said Declaration and Subscription, had these Doctrines under their Consideration, and have never found nor declared them in particular and express Terms to be contrary to the Doctrine held forth from the Word of God in our *Confession of Faith*? Therefore, if Mr. C ——— e will manage the Argument to Purpose, he must prove, that, notwithstanding of what is above observed, the present Judicatories of this National Church maintain the true Doctrine and the true Faith; and that, notwithstanding of the above Conduct and Management of the Judicatories, and the present State and Situation of Matters amongst us, the signing of our *Confession of Faith* is a satisfying Evidence that the Subscribers disclaim and disown Messieurs S ——— n and C ——— l's Principles. If our Reverend Brother or any other shall do this, they will do much to remove the Ground of our Secession, as it is stated upon the Doctrine: But I do not expect to see it done, till our *General Assemblies* shall do more than has been done, even by the General Assembly 1736 in their Act anent Preaching, tho' it contains some good and excellent Things.

The second Note or Mark of the true Church of God, whereby she is discerned from the *filthy Synagogues*, is, as Mr. C ——— e well observes from our first *Confession of Faith*,
 " The right Administration of the Sacraments of Jesus
 " Christ, which must be annexed unto the Word and Pro-
 " mise of God, to seal and confirm the same in our Hearts."
 And if it is enquired, When the Sacraments are rightly administered? we are told in the same *Confession*, Art. 22d.
 " That Sacraments be rightly ministered, we judge two
 " Things are requisite; the one, that they be ministered
 " by lawful Ministers, whom we affirm to be only they that
 " are appointed to the Preaching of the Word, into whose
 " Mouth God hath put some Sermon of Exhortation, they
 " being Men *lawfully chosen thereto by some Church*; the
 " other, that they be ministered in such Elements, and in
 " such Sort, as God hath appointed: Else we affirm, that
 " they cease to be right Sacraments of Jesus Christ." Mr.
 C ——— e cannot refuse, that there are many who have been intruded into the holy Ministry, being Men that were never lawfully chosen thereto by any Church; and, according to the foresaid *Confession*, they are not lawful Ministers, neither are the Sacraments dispensed by them right ministered, yea,
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according to the said *Confession*, they are not right Sacraments of Christ Jesus; and Mr. C——e cannot refuse, that the present Judicatories support, protect and countenance such Men in the Exercise of their Ministry, and in the Dispensation of the Sacraments, whom the *Confession* declares to be no lawful Ministers of Christ: Therefore it may be surprising, that Mr. C——e, Page 3d. in speaking of the second *Note* of a *true Church*, viz. the right Administration of Sacraments, should, without the least Limitation or Restriction, affirm, “I think none can object against this, that the Seals of God’s Covenant are as purely administered in this Church as ever they were in any.”

The third *Note* or *Mark* of a *true Church* is, “Ecclesiastical Discipline uprightly ministered as God’s Word prescribeth, whereby Vice is repressed and Virtue nourished.” Upon this Mr. C——e, Page 3d. says, “I believe there is no Church that hath a more exact Form of Process for Discipline, than now the Church of Scotland hath.” It does not belong to the present Question to examine the Truth of this Assertion; perhaps some good and weighty Reasons might be advanced for a Limitation and Restriction, both of Mr. C——e’s above Assertion, as also on the Words of that worthy Author whom he cites immediately thereafter: But Mr. C——e still waves the true State of the Question, whether of Design, or because he has not duly considered this Controversy, I shall not determine, tho’ Charity inclines me to the latter. The Question that natively arises from the fore said *Note* and *Mark* of a *true Church*, contained in our *Confession of Faith*, is, Whether or not the present Judicatories have a just Claim and Title to the same? or, If Ecclesiastical Discipline is uprightly administered amongst them, whereby Vice is repressed and Virtue nourished? Suppose the Church of Scotland had Acts and Rules for Discipline more exact than any Church ever had since the Apostles Days, What is this to the present Case? If her present Judicatories are, notwithstanding of these excellent Acts and Rules, abusing and perverting the Keys, and exercising a lordly and tyrannical Power over the Heritage of God; then it is certain, that Ecclesiastical Discipline is not uprightly administered amongst them. This is what the seceding Brethren have affirmed; and they have stated it as one of the Grounds of their Secession from the present Judicatories in their *first Testimony*, wherein they have instructed and proven the above Charge, both from the Acts of Assembly 1733 against the protesting

Ministers, and the *Presbytery of Dunfermline*, whereby unwarrantable Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion are imposed upon the Ministers and Members of this Church; as also, from a Tract and Series of Violence done to the Heritage of God, by the Intrusion of Ministers upon them, and from the magisterial and arbitrary Procedure of Church-judicatories in such violent Settlements.

Mr. C—e never acknowledges any such Thing as Tyranny in the Government or in the Administration of Discipline: He says, "If sometimes Discipline should not be exercised as it ought, that's not defended by the Church," *Essay* Page 3d. And he is "sorry ever such a Sentence was past, whereby the *four Brethren* were cast out from the Communion of this Church," Page 28th. Likewise he says, He cannot approve of the Sentence casting them out; yet he knows not but there may be Truth in what a worthy Minister of Christ wrote him, "I should never have advised my worthy Brother Mr. *Erskine* to have made any Confession of a Fault, even in his Expressions, when his Conscience justified him in the same: But I cannot think that his Silence at the Time that either the Synod or the General Assembly rebuked him, when they resolved thereby to finish the Process, would be construed an Acknowledgment of a Fault." But, in the *Review* of the Committee of Commission's *Narrative*, it is made evident, that his Silence in the above Case would have been a Dissembling with the Judicatories, and a Departing from his Testimony. Mr. C—e, Page 29th. affirms, "But, when it is granted that Sentence was unjust and tyrannical, it will not prove the Church of *Scotland* is so tyrannical that she ought to be separated from; for he is not a Tyrant who is guilty of a few Acts of Oppression, but he who is habitually guilty of them in his Administration. *A Tyrant*, says *Rutherford*, *Lex Rex*, Page 217. *is he who habitually sins against the Catholick Good of the Subjects and State, and subverteth Law*: And I think none will say, the Church of *Scotland* is habitually guilty of Tyranny and intolerable Persecution, whether of Soul or Body." But I ask Mr. C—e, May not a Church be habitually guilty of Ecclesiastick Tyranny, tho' she does not stir up the Civil Powers to Heading and Hanging? I ask him again, Whether or not the Intrusion of Ministers upon dissenting and reclaiming Congregations, is an Act of Tyranny and Oppression upon the Souls of Men? or, to use some of his own Expressions as they ly in his other Writings, Whether or

not it is an Act of Tyranny on the Souls of Men, to deprive the Lord's People of one of their valuable Rights and Privileges purchased for them by the Blood of the Redeemer, *viz.* the Election of their own Ministers? Mr. C——e may very well know, that the *seceding Brethren* have never stated their Secession upon a few Acts of Tyranny and Oppression, but upon a habitual Tract of Tyranny in the Administration, whereby the Judicatories of the Church have been for many Years bypast ruling over the Heritage of God with Rigour, and by their magisterial and arbitrary Proceedings have been breaking down our Presbyterian Constitution: And, according to the above Description of a Tyrant that he gives us from *Rutherford*, the present Judicatories have been sinning against the Catholick Good of the Subjects of Christ, and subverting the Laws of his spiritual Kingdom; unless he'll affirm, that the Catholick Good of his Subjects is not affected by the Settlement of Ministers, and that the Laws of Christ's Kingdom are not subverted by the magisterial Proceedings of the Judicatories.

But, says Mr. C——e, p. 30. when speaking of *violent Intrusions*, A considerable Struggle hath been made by many Ministers of this Church against them, *and a considerable Stop hath been put to them for some Time bygone*. One may be surpris'd to see Mr. C——e writing and publishing to the World (to give it no worse Name) such a gross Mistake. Tho' the Assembly 1734 did not pursue the violent Measures of former Assemblies, yet, did not both the Assemblies 1735 and 1736 return unto them? And he cannot be ignorant of the Decision of the last Assembly in the Affair of *Denny*, tho' Providence stop't the Execution of that most arbitrary Sentence. How then can he affirm that a Stop, yea, a considerable Stop, has been put to violent Intrusions for some Time bygone, when the contrary is evident to every one who owns that the Settlement of Ministers over dissenting and reclaiming Congregations is a violent Intrusion upon them?

The seceding Ministers have always alledged, and I humbly judge upon good Grounds, that, by the above Acts of Assembly *Anno* 1733, new and unwarrantable Terms of Ministerial and Christian Communion are impos'd upon the Ministers and Members of this Church. It is needless to enter upon the Proof of this, since it is done already in the several Papers that have been emitted by the foresaid Ministers: But it may be proper to notice, that Mr. C——e has done nothing to enervate any of the Arguments and Proofs that

that they have brought ; he does not positively refuse that the Sentences past against the protesting Ministers did impose sinful and unwarrantable Terms of Ministerial Communion. Yet I must observe, with all Deference unto him, that in his Way of Reasoning he trifles exceedingly ; as for Instance, when he tells us, p. 181. " That these Sentences were not " sinful Terms of Communion to all the Ministers of this " Church, for they respected the *four Brethren* allenarly : " As if an Act imposing sinful Terms of Communion, tho' directed immediately against *four Ministers*, did not equally extend to all the Members of the same Political Body. But that which Mr. C——e chiefly insists upon is, That the Act 1733, past against the foresaid Ministers, was materially rescinded by the Powers granted to the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* by the Assembly 1734, and by what the Synod did thereupon ; and therefore he thinks that the *Brethren* should have returned to the Judicatories, and that they should testify in a Way of Communion with them ; and that, if the foresaid Act 1733 contained any sinful Terms of Communion, the said Act being materially rescinded, this Ground of Secession falls to the Ground : On the above Things he insists from p. 165 to 178. But yet Mr. C——e never so much as toucheth upon the principal and chief Grounds upon which the Brethren have argued, That the sentences past against them were never either formally or materially repealed. I shall only observe, that, p. 165. at the Close, he pretends to give one of their Reasons from the Paper intituled, *Reasons* by Messieurs *Ebenezer Erskine*, &c. why they have not acceded to the Judicatories of the Church ; and he lays it as a Citation from p. 23. of the said Paper in the following Terms, " In Vindication of their not acceding upon what was done by that Assembly, and foresaid Synod " 1734, it is complained, *That Assembly did not themselves " judge of the Legality of the Sentences pronounced against the " Brethren as they ought, seeing the Synod could not do this.* " I have not seen Mens Words more miserably perverted and torn asunder ; he makes us to write the most unintelligible Stuff, he seems to me not to have understood what he was attempting to confute : And therefore I must lay the Reasons of their not acceding at large, as they ly in the above-mentioned Page ; and they are as follow,

1770, " The Assembly 1734 in the above Act refuse to enquire into the *Steps* of Proceeding taken by the several " Judicatories under whose Consideration the Case of the " *four Brethren* hath been, that is, they plainly declare that

“ they will not so much as enter upon the Consideration of
 “ the Act of *Assembly* 1733, or the Conduct of their Com-
 “ mission in consequence thereof: Can it then be said that
 “ they have in any Shape whatsoever repealed the said Act?
 “ But this will appear further, if it is considered,
 “ 2do, That the Assembly 1734 peremptorily discharge
 “ the Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* to judge of the *Legality*
 “ or *Formality* of the Proceedings of the Church-Judica-
 “ tories in relation to this Affair, or either to *approve* or
 “ *censure* the same; from whence it is plain, that the Act
 “ of *Assembly* 1733, and the Proceedings of the Judica-
 “ tories thereupon, are noway affected by the Act of As-
 “ sembly 1734, either as to their *Legality* or *Formality*:
 “ For tho’ it might be alledged that a Synod cannot regular-
 “ ly judge of, approve or condemn an Act of Assembly,
 “ such as the Act 1733 certainly is; yet no reasonable Ob-
 “ jection can be made why the Assembly 1734 could not
 “ have judged of the *Legality* and *Formality* of the Act of
 “ the former Assembly, and the Proceedings of the Judica-
 “ tories thereupon: And then in that Case there would
 “ have been a clear Ground for the Synod to have judged
 “ and declared that the Act 1733, and the Proceedings of
 “ the Judicatories in consequence of it, had been found
 “ *illegal* and *informal* by the Assembly 1734.” But Mr.
 C——e has set his Thumb upon the above as well as other
 Reasons that are adduced by the *Brethren* in the foresaid
 Paper to prove that the Sentences past against them were
 never materially rescinded. But, not to insist upon this,
 the Case with reference to the Ejection of the *four Ministers*
 stands thus; When they came before the *Commission August*
 1733, in consequence of the Act and Sentence of the pre-
 ceeding *Assembly*, they not only adhered to their *Protestation*
 and *Testimony* given in to that Assembly, but in their several
 Representations given in to the Commission they enlarged
 their Testimony, and stated the same both upon the Proceed-
 ings of Judicatories in Mr *Simson’s* Case, as also upon o-
 ther palpable and hainous Steps of Defection; and they
 were thrust out by the Commission *November* 1733 with this
 Testimony in their Hands: The Question then is, If the
 Brethren could return to the Judicatories upon what the
 Synod of *Perth* and *Stirling* did by vertue of their delega-
 ted Power and Authority, without giving up with the Te-
 stimony that was in their Hands, when their Guilt and Crime
 was upon the Matter still affirmed, and the Execution of the
 Sentence past against them only averted upon some political
 Con-

Considerations ; and especially when a particular Testimony for Truth, in Opposition to the Errors of the Time, is not to this very Day lifted up by the Judicatories of the Church ?

As for the Act with reference to the Presbytery of *Dunfermline*, it is affirmed, *Essay*, p. 34. That "the Assembly 1735 allowed some of these Parishes, who had Pastors thrust in upon them, a Liberty of Church-privileges wherever they might have Freedom to ask them ; which was a material Testimony against Intrusions." And, p. 173. "As to the Act of Assembly 1733 anent some Brethren in the Presbytery of *Dunfermline*, that Act is materially rescinded, in regard the Assembly having left it to the Synod of *Fife* to do in the Affair of *Kinross* (anent which that Act was made) as to the admitting of that People to partake of Church-privileges as they should think fit ; the Synod of *Fife* did upon this allow that People to have the Benefit of Church-privileges wherever they should think meet to ask them." Here I must notice, that it is not Matter of Fact that the *Assembly* 1735 allowed any of the Parishes who had Men thrust in upon them a Liberty of Church-privileges wherever they might have Freedom to ask them ; That Assembly did indeed remit the Case of some of these Parishes to the Synods concerned, with this exprefs Qualification, That the Synods should do what they found most for Edification : And in the very same Manner they refer the Case about the Inrolment of the Intruders in some of these Parishes to the respective Synods. If that Assembly had designed a material Testimony against Intrusions, as they would not have allowed the Synods to inrol Intruders, so they would have by themselves given the People the Privilege of Sealing Ordinances from faithful and sent Ministers ; and, if they had designed any material Rescinding of the Act, they would never have qualified their Remit in the Manner above-mentioned ; they would have declared, that it was for the Edification of the Body of Christ that the oppressed Members should have Gospel-ordinances administrate unto them by Ministers lawfully called. Besides, when the Synods concerned have thought fit to allow them the Benefit of Sealing Ordinances from neighbouring Ministers, it amounts to no more than this, That they pity the Weakness or Wilfulness of the People who will not submit to Ministers set over them by mere Church-authority : And, when they consider that a Secession is declared from the Judicatories on account of their arbitrary Proceedings, and that the People will have the Benefit of

Sealing

Sealing Ordinances from the seceding Ministers, they chose rather to allow them to receive them from their neighbouring Ministers. And this is the plain Meaning of what is reckoned most for Edification according, to the Assembly's Remit; and every unprejudiced Person may judge, if in all this there is any material Testimony against Intrusions, or any Rescinding of that Act of Assembly 1733 anent some Ministers in the Presbytery of *Dunfermline*.

From all that is above-represented, it is very much to be regretted that there is so much Reason and Ground for drawing the following Conclusion, *viz.* That the present Judicatories of this National Church, on account of their Proceedings in the many gross doctrinal Errors that have been brought to their Bar, as also in regard of a Series and Tract of magisterial, lordly and tyrannical Proceedings in the Administration of the Government and Discipline of the Lord's House, together with the Countenance that they give to the Dispensation of the Word and Sacraments by these who are not *lawfully chosen* thereunto, have not a just Claim to the Notes and Marks of a true Church that are given in our *first Confession of Faith*, whereby, as the said Confession speaks, the Church is discerned from the *filthy Synagogues*, *viz.* the true Preaching of the Word, or the Maintenance of the true Doctrine and the true Faith, the right Administration of the Sacraments and Ecclesiastical Discipline uprightly administered as God's Word prescribeth; and consequently we cannot *receive* and *embrace* these Judicatories, or, which is the same Thing, we cannot warrantably join in Ministerial Communion with them.

Likewise, from what is above-represented, we may see against whom the Charge of *Schism* or *Separation* is to be laid. And here I shall only make use of the Words of Mr. *Rutherford* as they are cited by Mr. C—e; "When the greatest Part of a Church makes Defection from the Truth, the lesser Part remaining sound, the greatest Part is the Church of Separatists," *Due Right*, p. 225. *Essay*, p. 16. Mr. C—e seems to be jealous lest this Citation make against him, therefore he gives us his Commentary upon it; "Surely he means (*viz.* Mr. *Rutherford*) of declared Defections from the Truth in Fundamentals;" And, to prove this, he cites another Paragraph from Mr. *Rutherford*. But, whatever is Mr. *Rutherford's* Meaning, surely it is a weighty and grave Question, What are fundamental Points, and what not? Our Divines have been very cautious and wary in determining in this important Question, yet it

is generally agreed amongst sound Divines, that the true Deity of the Son of God is a fundamental Article of Faith; but how this Foundation-truth has been treated by the present Judicatories has been already observed.

This leads me to notice some just Remarks of the Reverend Committee of Assembly *Anno* 1727, upon the 7th Article of the second Libel exhibited against Mr. *Simson*, as the said Remarks ly in their excellent Paper containing the Grounds why they judge the several Articles of the foresaid Libel relevant: The seventh Article of Libel is, *That, were it not for the Prospect of Happiness, we could not, and therefore would not serve God.* State of the Processes, p. 277. Upon which the Committee amongst other Things observe, That "what is set forth in this Article is contrary to the Instinct of that new Nature the Lord endueth all his People with in Regeneration." They add, "Considering how much all Men are bound to make the Glory of God their chief End, tho' yet they are called herewith to pursue Happiness; and that likewise it is through a prevailing Respect to God's Honour and Glory, and not a mere or chief Respect to our own Happiness, that the Difference betwixt Nature and Grace is to be cleared to the doubtful Christian:" They further observe, "That Mr. S—— in his *Defences* only allows the seeking after God's Glory as it conduceth to our Happiness, which (say they) is a sacrificing all to the Idol of ourselves, and going only the Length of the *foolish Virgins*, who may desire the Oil of Grace for the Sake of their own Happiness, and that they may enter into Heaven." If it is so, that a doctrinal Point was before the Judicatories of this Church, by which the Difference betwixt Nature and Grace is to be cleared to the doubtful Christian, and if an Error contrary to the Instinct of that new Nature which the Lord endueth all his People with in Regeneration, and which sacrificeth all unto the Idol of ourselves, then a fundamental Error, or an Error striking at the *Vitals* of practical Religion, was brought to their Bar; consequently the Judicatories of this Church, in passing this, together with Mr. *Simson's* other Errors contained in the second Libel, without any Testimony against them, have let go a Foundation-point, or they have let an Error striking at the Foundations pass without any Testimony against it. Further, I judge it will not be refused, that Mr. *Campbell's* Principle about Self-love and Self-interest is the same upon the Matter with Mr. *Simson's*, as it is laid in the above Article: And, if it is true that the General Assembly

bly 1736 have adopted Mr. *Campbell's* Principle, as the *seceding Brethren* alledge in their *judicial Act and Testimony* (and they have given such Reasons for this as Mr. C——e has not yet disproven) then it may be justly concluded, that an Error which strikes at the Vitals of practical Religion has been adopted by that Assembly. And what tho' it is true that some worthy and godly Men did not see into the true Meaning of the said Act with reference to Mr. *Campbell*, yet it is still an Act of Assembly, and it must be taken in the genuine Sense and Meaning of the Words compared with Mr. *Campbell's* Principles. I do not think when Mr. C——e took the Field that he had the least Thought that the Dispute would have run so deep; and I doubt not but other Questions of considerable Importance will cast up when we come to engage more closely in the present Controversy.

The Reverend Mr. C——e is the first that has appeared upon the Field against the *judicial Act and Testimony*, except what was done last Year by an *anonymous* Writer in a Paper published under the Title of *A seasonable Testimony*, &c. As to this Paper I shall only observe, That the *seventeen* Queries contained in the second Part thereof are all taken out of the above-mentioned *Narrative* of the *Commission* published *Anno* 1733, except the two last of the said Queries, and most of them are laid in the Words of the *Narrative*; yet the Author is neither so candid nor fair as to declare so much: And, as he takes no Manner of Notice of what was said by the *seceding Brethren* in the *Review* of the said *Narrative*, so in the other Parts of that Paper he never once enters into the Argument, tho', in the Part that he calls *serious Expostulations*, he pours out a Flood of Words, commending Peace and Unity, which are most desirable when they have Truth for their Cement and Foundation; therefore I humbly judge the *seceding Brethren* had no Manner of Reason to take Notice of it, tho' it was commended by some who it seems take Words for Reason and Argument.

I shall now conclude this *Postscript* with a few general Remarks on the Reverend Mr. C——e's *Essay*.

1. In order to discredit the *judicial Act and Testimony* of the *associate Presbytery*, he does what he can to defame and blacken the Assemblies of our last reforming Period. I humbly judge the *Brethren* said enough with respect to what was defective in that Period, when they express themselves thus in their *judicial Act and Testimony*, p. 18. "But, since the Church while militant is in an imperfect State, it is not hereby intended to affirm, that under the above men-

tioned

" tioned Period (*viz.* from 1638 to 1649) there was no-
 " thing defective or wanting as to the Beauty and Order of
 " the House of God, or that there was nothing culpable in
 " the Administration: All that is designed by the above
 " particular Deduction is to declare, that this Church en-
 " deavoured, and mercifully attained, a considerable Pitch
 " of Reformation during the foresaid Period. Towards
 " this their several Contendings and Wrestlings, their solemn
 " Vows and Engagements, their Declarations and Testimo-
 " nies all pointed." But Mr. G——e is not satisfied with
 the above Declaration, and therefore everywhere in his
Essay he loads the Assemblies of the above-mentioned Pe-
 riod with most unwarrantable and odious Proceedings. I
 know not what Cause he has served by his Labours this
 Way, unless it is that of the *Prelatists* on the one Hand,
 and of the *Sectarians* on the other, who will readily ap-
 plaud his Performance as excellent: I hope a more just, more
 full and fair Character of that Period may be drawn in due
 Time. I shall only touch at the Treatment which he gives
 the famous Assembly 1638, and particularly an Act (as he
 terms it) past on the 17th of *December*: I know not how
 oft it is mentioned, as p. 20, 33, &c. and, when he is
 brought to any Pinch, he throws it up for his Relief. That
 which he points at is the 17th Article of a large and excel-
 lent Act; and, whereas Mr. G——e thinks fit to mention
 only the last Clause of the said Article, it is necessary in
 order to do Justice to that Assembly, and to undeceive the
 Reader, that I transcribe the whole, and it is as follows;
 " Whereas the *Confession of the Faith* of this Kirk, con-
 " cerning both Doctrine and Discipline, so often called in
 " question by the corrupt Judgment and tyrannous Autho-
 " rity of the pretended Prelates, is now clearly explained,
 " and by this whole Kirk, represented by this General
 " Assembly, concluded, ordained also to be subscribed by
 " all Sorts of Persons within the said Kirk and Kingdom:
 " The Assembly constitutes and ordains, that from hence-
 " forth no Sort of Person, of whatsoever Quality and De-
 " gree, be permitted to speak or write against the said *Con-*
 " *fession*, this Assembly, or any Act of this Assembly, and
 " that under the Pain of incurring the Censures of this
 " Kirk." This is the Act of Assembly that Mr. G——e
 represents in the most odious Manner, and which he insi-
 nuates is a most tyrannical Act, and which he alledges re-
 stricts Ministerial Freedom more than the Act 1733; yea,
 he challenges all the Separatists, as he terms them, to in-

since an *Act* since that Time more unreasonable than this, p. 41. I am grieved to see one of his Character writing at this Rate. This famous Assembly was ordered to rise by the King's Commissioner, and they continued notwithstanding to sit and to do their Business, whereby they gave a large practical Testimony to the Headship and Sovereignty of the Lord Jesus over his own spiritual Kingdom; they explained and confirmed the *Confession of Faith*, concerning both Doctrine and Discipline, in Opposition unto the corrupt Judgment and tyrannous Authority of the pretended Prelates, as the above Article declares; they condemned Prelacy, and the five Articles of *Perth*, and deposed the pretended Prelates, as their Acts bear. In regard they were ordered to dissolve by the King's Commissioner, therefore the Constitution of this Assembly, and consequently the Validity of their Proceedings, were impugned at this Time only by a Malignant Generation, open and declared Enemies to the Lord's Work: On this Account, in the above Article they assert their just Authority, and the Validity of their Proceedings, which they had good Reason to do. The Judicatories of the Church can do nothing against the Truth; but when their Acts and Proceedings are for the Maintenance and Support of Truth, they may justly appoint Ecclesiastical Censures to be inflicted upon malignant Opposers of their Acts and Proceedings, whether by Word or Writ; and this is all that is done by the fore-said Assembly in the above Article: Must therefore a *reforming Assembly* be defamed, to support the Credit of a *deforming Assembly*, or at least to extenuate the sinful and unwarrantable Proceedings of the Assembly 1733? Or, shall the one be compared with the other? What is said in the Close of the above Article must be connected with the first Part of it, and it plainly respects the honest and zealous Endeavours of this Assembly to vindicate their Constitution as warrantable, and their Proceeding as valid, in asserting and maintaining our Doctrine and Discipline in Opposition to the Tyranny and Corruption of the perfidious Prelates.

2. In order to discredit the judicial *Act and Testimony*, he appears to me to extenuate the Sins and Defections of the present Period. Tho' he acknowledges, *Chap. 3d*, some Things wrong amongst us that are Ground of Mourning; yet he does not make any Acknowledgment of a habitual Tract of Tyranny and Oppression upon the Lord's Heritage: Yea, according to him, tho' sundry Persons be leavened with gross Errors in the Church of *Scotland* at this Day,
 “ yet

" yet it is unaccountable to charge the Church of Scotland as Favourers of these Errors, p. 18." I shall not charge the Church of Scotland with favouring Errors: But yet the seceding Brethren may justly charge the present *Judicatories* with protecting, supporting and countenancing Errors, and that because they have neither testified particularly nor expressly against them, neither have they inflicted due Censure upon the Erroneous, tho' brought to their Bar.

3. Mr. C——e argues against our Secession from the present *Judicatories*, from the Practice of the Prophets under the Old Testament, who, notwithstanding of the gross Corruptions amongst the Priests, never separated from the Church and Temple-worship; and from the Practice of our blessed Lord, who, notwithstanding of the manifold Corruptions of the *Jewish* Church in his Time, attended the Temple-worship, and ordered his Disciples to do so, p. 39, 40. Tho' this Reasoning is very frequent, yet, if it prove any Thing at all, it proves too much, and more than Mr. C——e himself will own; namely, that we ought to submit to Ordinances dispensed by such as are grossly immoral in their Practice. But Mr. C——e, p. 35, says he's much of this Opinion, " That such as are evidently scandalous " may be withdrawn from; albeit, thro' the Iniquity of " the Times, they should not be censured by a Church-judicatory when complained of." But, with Reference to the above Argument, we are to consider, that the *Church visible* was confined unto one Nation under the Old-Testament Dispensation, and that now the *visible Catholick Church* under the Gospel, " is not confined to one Nation as before " under the Law, but consists of all those throughout the " World that profess the true Religion, and of their " Children, *Confession* Chap. 25. § 2." As the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, did not separate from the Catholick visible Church, but observed the Temple-worship and Ordinances; so it is one Thing to depart from a particular, Provincial or National Church, on account of their Corruptions, and another Thing to separate from the Catholick visible Church. If the Prophets and Disciples of Christ attended the Old-Testament Altar and Temple-worship, so I hope those that depart from Ministerial Communion with the present *Judicatories*, on account of their Defections, do, notwithstanding, cleave to our New-Testament Altar Christ Jesus, and to the Gospel-ordinances and Institutions, viz. Word, Sacraments and Discipline, which are given primarily to the Church Catholick visible. Mr.

C——e argues, p. 40. "But, if it be a Sin to join in Communion with a Church having Corruptions, or whose Practices are not what they ought to be, then it would follow, that the Lord's People under the Old Testament were under a Necessity of sinning, either by forsaking of God's Ordinances, or by joining with corrupt Men in a Church with many Corruptions; or that the same moral Action which was lawful then would be sinful in us now.—— If so be the Presence of wicked Men defile the Worship to the Godly, then they had been bound to withdraw from the Church, even under the Old Testament, altho' there had been no other Church to join with." But the whole of the above Reasoning proceeds upon this gross Mistake, as if the seceding Brethren affirmed that the Sins of Fellow-worshippers polluted and defiled the Ordinances to others. This is a Principle maintained by the rigid *Brownists* and other *Seſtaries*; and it is a Principle justly opposed by Mr. *Rutherford* in his *Due Right and Peaceable Plea*, as also by other great Men whom Mr. C——e names in his Essay; and they manage the Argument with good Success, from the Old-Testament Church, against the above Principle. But, as this is not a Principle maintained by any of the seceding Brethren, viz. That the Sins of Fellow-worshippers pollute and defile the Worship, or that the Sins of a Fellow-communicant pollute that Ordinance to others; so their Seceſſion is not founded upon any such Principle or Bottom: Yet they judge a Seceſſion from the present Judicatories warrantable and necessary on many other Grounds and Reasons, namely, that it is necessary in order to their *holding fast that which they have received*, Rev. ii. 25. necessary in order unto their *standing fast in the Liberty where-with Christ hath made them free*, Gal. v. 1. necessary in order unto a suitable Testimony against a Course of Defection and Backsliding, Rom. xvi. 17. a necessary Mean likewise of Conviction to a corrupt and backsliding Party, 2 *Thess.* iii. 14. as also necessary in order to maintain and keep up a Testimony for Truth, and for transmitting the same pure and uncorrupted to Posterity. On these and many such Considerations, a Seceſſion from some particular Churches, that are degenerate and corrupt, may be necessary Duty.

4. Mr. C——e, in order to rub upon the Conduct of the seceding Brethren, and to discredit their Testimony, endeavours to make them inconsistent with themselves, in Citations that he brings from some Papers published by them many Years ago: Thus he frequently cites a Paper published by

by my Reverend Brother Mr. Moncrieff, I think about twenty Years ago, tho' there is a vast Difference betwixt the Situation of the Church of Scotland then and now. I humbly judge this is a low and mean Way of arguing, and unworthy of any fair and ingenuous Disputant: How does it support Mr. C——e's Cause, tho' he should prove all the Brethren inconsistent with themselves in their former Writings (which he has not done as yet with respect to any one of them) unless he can prove that they are wrong now? If I should alledge and prove, that, when Mr. Currie affirms Page 29th, that the Church of Scotland is not habitually guilty of Tyranny, that he is inconsistent with himself in his other Writings concerning the Right of the Christian People to choose their own Ministers, I should thereby rub upon Mr. Currie; but it would by no Means strengthen the Cause I plead for, or support my Argument.

5. Mr. Currie thro' his *Essay* jumbles together the *Judicial Act and Testimony emitted by the associate Presbytery*, and a Book called *Plain Reasons*: His Design is obvious and plain; but, as the seceding Brethren have no Concern in that Book, so I have taken no Manner of Notice of it.

6. He thinks fit to publish a great many private Stories and Hearsays: These are scattered thro' his Book, with an evident Design to defame the Conduct of the Brethren, and to discredit their *Judicial Act and Testimony*; as Preface, Pages 12th and 13th, &c. As this is an unmanly Way of managing a Cause; so I hope, if the *seceding Brethren* shall think fit to give any Reply to this bulky Performance, that they will never be so mean and low as to rake into such Dunghills.

7. I am heartily sorry for that Bitterness of Spirit that I see breathing throughout the whole of this *Essay*. Whatever Contempt Mr. C——e may pour upon the seceding Brethren, and whatever hard Names he may think fit to bestow upon them, I wish he had treated the Cause and Testimony they hold with more of *Meekness* and *Fear*: He seems to be confident (Preface, Page 12th) that, upon reading his Book, his Readers may see that there is a good deal more to be said in Vindication of the Church of Scotland, and against Separation from her, than some of them imagined, namely, such as are much disobliged already at some for not joining the seceding Brethren; yet I doubt not but the seceding Brethren have very much likewise to say for themselves, and I'm sorry they have so much to say: I sincerely wish that Matters were otherwise stated in the present
Judi-

judicatories of this National Church, and that there were no such Grounds of Secession from them. Our Reverend Brother has given sufficient Ground and Matter of Irritation, from the Way and Manner whereby he has managed the Argument. Every one of us have much Reason to be jealous over our own Spirits: Therefore I pray, that our Contentings upon this Subject may be only and singly for Truth, and that they may be governed with a Disposition and Temper of Spirit becoming the Gospel of Christ; and let Truth have the Victory, and let God have all the Glory.

Perth, May 15th

1738.

WILLIAM WILSON.



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